

THE NEW ZEALAND BRAVERY DECORATION (N.Z.B.D.)

Andrew Ian (Andy) WATSON Senior Constable, New Zealand Police

Date of action: 24 October 2022

Date of award: 6 December 2024

Citation

Mid-afternoon on 24 October 2022, a car crashed into a ditch and rolled onto its passenger side on State Highway 1 near Kekerengu. The female driver was injured and trapped inside, while the injured passenger was able to escape onto the roadside. The vehicle caught fire and passing motorists moved the passenger away from the car when it ignited.

As the fire intensified, members of the public attempted to extinguish it, with two men entering the car to attempt to free the driver prior to the arrival of emergency services. Mr Andy Watson (then Senior Constable) was the first emergency responder to arrive at the scene. Senior Constable Watson saw the driver lying trapped in the front passenger side of the vehicle, with flames beginning to run up the clothing on her leg.

Senior Constable Watson used his fire extinguisher to suppress the fire on the driver's clothing. He lay on his stomach on the upturned side of the car, reaching as far as he could into the vehicle through the rear door and managed to grasp the driver's hand, which had sustained burns. Two other motorists held Watson by his belt, so he could reach further into the vehicle without falling. Together they tried to lift and pull the driver from the car, but Watson lost his grip. He tried again, attempting to reach the driver's other arm as well, but she was unable to move it due to her injuries.

At this time, the fire was burning through the console of the vehicle. Senior Constable Watson's attempts to reach the trapped driver proved impossible and the other motorists pulled him from the car due to the severity of the fire. Soon after Senior Constable Watson exited the vehicle, it was engulfed by fire.

Senior Constable Watson demonstrated exceptional bravery in his attempt to rescue the trapped driver, suffering secondary burns to his arm as a result.