

THE NEW ZEALAND BRAVERY MEDAL (N.Z.B.M.)

Zak Randall BRISTOW

Date of action: 18 May 2023

Date of award: 6 December 2024

Citation

Late on the night of 18 May 2023, three intoxicated men attempted to gain entry to Hokianga Hospital in Rawene. They were accompanied by a healthcare assistant, as one of the men had a severe laceration to his wrist. A nurse let the group inside the Hospital and directed the wounded man to a bed in the Emergency Room. Two nurses then attempted to clean and assess the injury, but the wounded man was agitated, flailing his arms and acting aggressively. The nurses were the only medical staff on duty.

The three men became increasingly aggressive, verbally abusing the two nurses. They became severely agitated and angry when the nurses and the healthcare assistant attempted to stop them, as they were creating an unsafe and hostile environment for the two nurses and other patients. Two of the men made death threats against the nurses.

The nurses locked themselves in an office and called the Police, but the closest Police station was a 90-minute drive away. The nurses contacted the Rawene Fire Service and volunteer firefighter Mr Zak Bristow, who was on-call, arrived within ten minutes. In this time the men continued to verbally abuse the nurses, demanding they treat the wounded man, and being advised the doctor was on his way. One man broke a door to a patient's room and assaulted the patient. The doctor arrived and was also punched in the face.

On his arrival, Mr Bristow attempted to speak calmly with the three men, which worked initially before the men became aggressive and violent again. Mr Bristow attempted to intercept the men who were walking towards other patients' rooms. The men started kicking and punching Mr Bristow, continuing to do so while he was on the ground, while the nurses and doctor stayed in the office. The Police arrived and de-escalated the situation, allowing the doctor to treat the injured man before Police removed the three men.

Mr Bristow demonstrated bravery in distracting three intoxicated, agitated men away from harming hospital staff and patients, receiving injuries as a result.