

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

### **Ngakina Jane BERTRAND** **Sergeant, New Zealand Police**

Date of action: 17 – 18 January 2005

Date of award: 14 October 2006

#### *Citation*

On 17 and 18 January 2005 there were riots at Yandina in the Solomon Islands during an industrial dispute. At the time of the riots Sergeant Bertrand was a Police Constable with the acting rank of Senior Sergeant. On the first day, 17 January, a group of protesters attempted to storm the Police boat tying up at the wharf. Constable Bertrand, led a small number of Royal Solomon Islands police officers to deal with this attack. She and her small group were heavily outnumbered but, despite being assaulted by a number of protesters, she was able to stand her ground and make an arrest while waiting for back-up. After the prisoner had been moved to the Police Station the crowd attempted to storm the building to release the man and a two hour struggle ensued before the mob was forced away. During the struggle a number of women and children were pushed to the front of the crowd to prevent the police using pepper spray or baton charges to disperse them. With the young children in the front line some of the men at the rear began using slingshots to fire stones at the police, some of which were large and thrown with such force they travelled more than 100 metres. Constable Bertrand took the risk of placing herself at the front to protect the children and calling upon those slinging stones to cease their activities. Her positive action and the respect the local population had for her encouraged the rock throwers to stop. The Police present at this incident did not have protective equipment available to them.

The next day, 18 January, some 50 people attacked Police lines in front of a ship that had arrived to load the local copra crop. Some of the crowd retreated leaving the ground open again for rocks to be thrown by slingshot at the Police. Despite being struck on the leg by a rock, and receiving a significant injury, Constable Bertrand took a team of Royal Solomon Island police officers to the rear of the crowd in an attempt to deter the stone throwers and arrest those who continued to assault the Police lines. Her actions played a major part in temporarily restoring order. A little later, another group of about 50 strikers moved to the rear of the copra company's yard, destroyed the boundary fence and began stoning the workers inside. The Police reserve group went to confront them and Constable Bertrand took the police vehicle from the police station and acted as a collection point for prisoners and the injured. The vehicle immediately came under attack, with the entire crowd turning against the police. Over 400 people were now attacking the police positions. Constable Bertrand retreated to the Police Station and despite the risk exposed herself to a hail of rocks in order to move to safety a group of children who had been sitting nearby. She then managed to get some protective equipment and led a Royal Solomon Island Police team out to disperse the attackers.

After 90 minutes of sustained action the attackers were dispersed and order was restored. In a subsequent clean-up, more than 200 rocks were removed from the back lawn of the Police Station.

Constable Bertrand distinguished herself with a number of acts of bravery during this very dangerous period.