

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

Michael Scott Riley

Date of action: 8 September 2015

Date of award: 4 June 2018

Citation

On 8 September 2015 a man entered the McDonald's restaurant on Main and Wakefield Streets in Upper Hutt carrying a .303 rifle in a soft carry case. It was a busy lunch period with around 30 to 40 people in the restaurant. He approached the counter area and removed the rifle from its case.

Mr Michael Riley, a First Assistant staff member was in the restaurant's office when he was told there was a man at the counter with a gun. Mr Riley walked through the kitchen to the counter, where the gunman then pointed the rifle at him and demanded that everyone leave the building. He then raised the rifle and fired a single shot into the ceiling, before waving the gun around and repeating that he wanted everyone to leave.

Mr Riley asked if he could direct people out of the restaurant and, with the gunman's agreement, began directing staff and customers out of the building. Throughout this period the gunman's demeanour oscillated between calm and agitated. Mr Riley noticed a man and his children about to come back into the restaurant from the playground area of the building and told the man to use the playground exit.

The gunman instructed Mr Riley to remove a pram from the building. Mr Riley removed the pram via the main entrance and then returned inside, asking whether he could check if anyone was in the toilets as he wanted to ensure everyone was safe. The gunman agreed but told Mr Riley to hurry up or he would shoot him.

After verifying the toilets were empty, Mr Riley moved to exit the building via the kitchen. The gunman initially stopped Mr Riley and demanded a burger, but then told Mr Riley to leave. As he exited Mr Riley heard the gunman fire a shot at Police and directed staff out of the storage area behind the restaurant, closing the gate to secure the area. He told staff to stay behind the cars in the carpark and directed three women sitting in a nearby car to also take cover with the staff. Mr Riley collected a road cone from nearby roadworks and placed it on the restaurant's driveway to deter anyone from attempting to use the drive-through while the gunman was present. He then joined the restaurant staff behind the cars until Police resolved the incident.

Mr Riley remained calm and collected throughout the incident and demonstrated exceptional bravery by engaging with the unpredictable gunman to ensure all customers and staff were able to leave the building safely.