

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

BRACEY, Richard Mervyn
Sergeant, New Zealand Police

Date of action: 14 July 2024

Date of award: 13 December 2025

Citation

Early in the afternoon of 14 July 2024, Sergeant Richard Bracey attended a Police response to a family harm incident at a two-bedroom house in Clover Park, Auckland. A woman had argued with her partner and left the house, fearing for her safety, as her partner was threatening to burn the house down. Constable Fritzi Faber and another officer initially responded, meeting the woman away from the property and going to talk with the man still inside the unit. After a conversation with the man through a window, Constable Faber issued a Police Safety Order for the woman's protection and to remove the man, who was agitated and had locked himself in the house.

Further Police officers arrived, including Sergeant Bracey. Together with Constable Faber, Bracey climbed over a neighbouring fence to the rear of the house and identified an open bathroom window. They decided to enter through the window to arrest the non-compliant man. The officers were unable to fit through the window with their Police vests on, so removed them to climb inside. Faber went first and Bracey asked another officer outside to hand the vests through the window. Inside, Faber replaced her vest, but before Bracey could grab his vest, the man ran from a bedroom past the officers into the adjoining garage.

In the garage, the man swung a fishing rod at Sergeant Bracey's face, before opening a large plastic petrol canister and dousing the floor. Bracey tackled the man, who dropped the canister, and drove him back against the garage door. An officer outside tried unsuccessfully to open the garage tilt door, which wouldn't move with the power off. Bracey tried to gain control of the man and Constable Faber joined to help restrain him, each grabbing an arm and dragging the man towards the garage rear door. During the struggle the man broke free, pulled a lighter from his pocket and ignited the petrol, which caught immediately and covered around three quarters of the garage floor space. Constable Faber let go of the man's arm in response, seeing flames around knee-height at her feet and higher throughout the garage, with black smoke gathering. Faber retreated into the hallway. Flames rose to around waist height and Bracey's boots caught fire.

An officer outside tried to open the rear door to the garage, and Bracey yelled at him to break the door glass. The glass was broken and two officers entered the garage, running through the flames to grab the man, pulling him through the rear door and escorting him to a Police truck on the road.

In the garage, Sergeant Bracey feared the burning petrol canister would explode, so he picked it up and threw it outside onto grass to prevent the fire from worsening. Constable Faber entered the garage from the hallway to assist Bracey, grabbing blankets from an adjacent bedroom and throwing one over the fire closest to the hallway door, partly suffocating the fire. She grabbed more blankets and with Bracey tried to smother the flames, but the blankets also caught fire. The garage was filling with toxic, black smoke. Faber stepped outside the garage to breathe some fresh air, before she and Bracey finished suppressing the fire with containers of water from the laundry tub.

Sergeant Bracey and Constable Faber were treated for mild smoke inhalation.