

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

### Meli Graham Leighton Benjamin BALENIVALU

Date of action: 10 May 2021

Date of award: 6 December 2024

#### *Citation*

Mid-afternoon on 10 May 2021, a man with a short kitchen knife in each hand attacked a staff member at a supermarket in central Dunedin, causing multiple wounds as she tried to defend herself. Several shoppers and staff in the busy supermarket attempted to restrain the offender during his frenzied attack, which occurred in little over a minute, with four people in total sustaining stab wounds.

A supermarket employee, Mr Meli Balenivalu, was working nearby at the time. He heard a scream and ran to the pharmacy aisle where he saw the wounded staff member on the ground and found a supermarket supervisor, Mr Dallas Wilson, attempting to restrain the offender. Mr Balenivalu saw a knife in the offender's hand and grabbed his wrist to attempt to stop him hurting anyone else. During the struggle the offender broke free, pushing Mr Balenivalu into the shelves and stabbing Mr Wilson multiple times.

Mr Balenivalu pushed the offender away and told the injured Mr Wilson to run. At this time another man had intervened and attempted to disarm the offender. The offender turned his attention on the man and his wife, stabbing them multiple times. Mr Balenivalu retreated at this time and began directing other shoppers to an exit at the rear of the store. The offender was eventually restrained by other shoppers until uniformed Police arrived to arrest him.

Mr Balenivalu acted without hesitation to assist his colleagues, demonstrating bravery by entering the struggle with the offender and attempting to disarm him to prevent further harm.