

Jack Knife - The crashing of a policeman

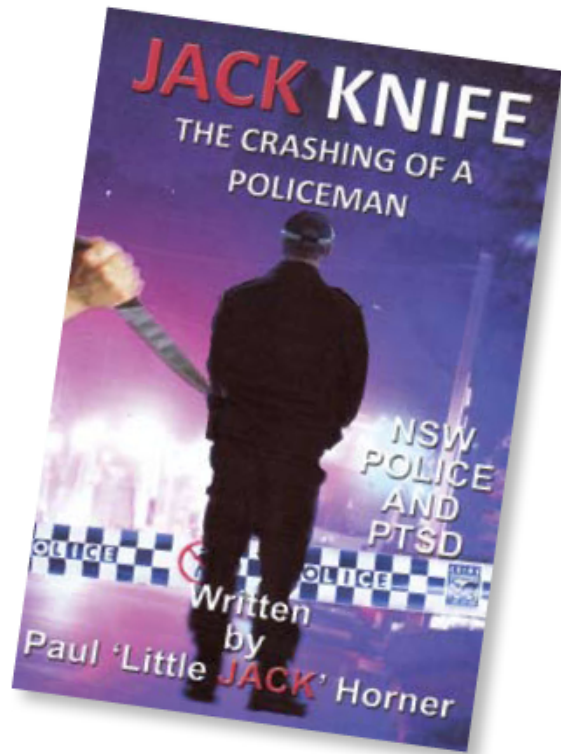
(NSW Police & PTSD)

By Paul 'Little Jack' Horner

Published by Zeus Publications

RRP: \$32.95

www.zeus-publications.com



LET ME SAY FROM the outset this story may be disturbing for some readers. Why? Well, former New South Wales Senior Constable Paul 'Jack' Horner's career is a fine reflection of what has happened to very many other former and serving police across all the Australian police jurisdictions. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is very real and is a tragic, irreversible side effect for most police arising from them just doing the job they loved, a job, in the vast majority of cases, performed with great distinction.

Whereas Paul Horner's true story in *Jack Knife - The Crashing of a Policeman* may not be dissimilar to a plethora of other stories, the difference is that he has bravely chosen to make his policing experiences and his subsequent suffering public. There may be something cathartic for him in doing this, but in doing so he is to be highly commended and admired. The psychological demons that are ever-present and haunting for most, if not all PTSD sufferers, are sometimes best left undisturbed. So to take this book on and wake your own unwanted harmful emotional memories of complex policing experiences should be done with caution.

Paul is of a rare breed of New South Wales police officer. He chose to perform country service, not in a quiet, little country town full of retired graziers and 4-wheel drives, but in a medium sized town in far north-west New South Wales. The reward to taking on this type of general duty is a coastal posting after three years, but at what cost to your mental health and dignity?

Most, if not all who serve in this location leave the town harmed in some way. Their intense policing experiences are only tempered by the deep and life-long relationships they develop with work mates. This is not to make a judgement on the type of 'customer' encountered in these towns as the demolition of social mores and the poverty trap that dominates these places happened long before Paul Horner and his wife, Jenny arrived in the town.

Paul Horner is a very good friend. In this book he talks lovingly of his police friends. He takes the reader on a fast, exciting ride as he details his worst moments and his very best moments in his early postings in Sydney and in that career defining country location. When he hits obstacles from management he ups the invective. Some may not be attracted to the 'in your face' approach taken by Paul in this book but there is an assured golden thread of truth shining through his words.

As a piece of pure real life literature Paul may be the first to admit that *Jack Knife* is not going to win many awards. The very blokey and colloquial style of writing, it could be argued, may reduce the efficacy of the story. I am not of that view, although you do feel at times that if Paul had elaborated a little more his messages may have been more effective. There is real desire, at times, when reading this story, for Paul to explain the bigger picture. He does though consolidate your understanding of his reactions to a vast array of operational and managerial harms he suffered during his 11 years of service. ★