

Police officer attacked after going to help accused, court told

Ice user jailed for stabbing

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A VIOLENT ice user who stabbed a Ballarat police officer only days after threatening two other police officers with a hunting knife, has been jailed for at least two years.

Damian Jack Power, 24, of Geelong, had been having a psychotic episode due to effects of the drug ice when he stabbed Senior Sergeant David Reither four times while on the side of the Midland Highway, near Geelong, about 8.30pm on August 21 last year.

In the Melbourne County Court on Thursday, Judge Gerard Mullally sentenced Power to a maximum term of four years and eight months' jail.

He said Senior Sergeant Reither had been trying to offer assistance to Power after noticing him on the side of the road with his girlfriend.

The court heard Power, who had that morning been released from the psychiatric ward of a Geelong hospital, was the passenger in a car driven by his girlfriend and had pulled on the hand brake while they drove at full speed, causing the car to spin 180 degrees on the highway.

Judge Mullally said Senior Sergeant Reither, who was in a marked police car on his way back to Ballarat, pulled over to help.

"Senior Sergeant Reither rang his wife while bleeding on the side of the road,

sort of creature in the back of his girlfriend's car.

The court heard Senior Sergeant Reither assured Power and his girlfriend that he could help them, but Power attacked the officer as he was calling triple-0, stabbing him four times in the side of his abdomen.

Judge Mullally said the officer had to be flown to a Melbourne hospital for emergency surgery, with injuries including a fractured rib near his heart and cuts to his diaphragm and spleen.

Judge Mullally said it was 18 days before, on August 18, that Power took a hunting knife to his Geelong workplace and threatened fellow staff members.

He also threatened two

police constables who attended the scene, asking them to shoot him.

The judge said it was violence "so out of proportion and so out of character", adding Power had been in the midst of a psychotic episode because of his drug use.

He said Power had been and hardworking man of good character, with no prior convictions.

"You were a quiet and gentle young man with a lot of potential", Judge Mullally said.

"The one unstable aspect of your life was your use of drugs."

The court heard Power had used cannabis from his early teens, slowly progressing to ecstasy, magic mushrooms

and then ice.

Power pleaded guilty last week to charges including reckless conduct endangering a person and intentionally causing serious injury.

Judge Mullally said Power had strong prospects of rehabilitation and that a long jail term wasn't warranted due to a number of "out of the ordinary" mitigating factors.

He said the main mitigating factor was that Power had been psychotic and unwell when he offended, adding he was now mentally well again.

The judge ordered that 301 days of pre-sentence detention be counted as time served.



Senior Sergeant David Reither not knowing whether he'd live to see her or his son again.

The judge said Power had become "quite disturbed" after using ice in the lead-up to the offending, adding he was completely irrational and believed there had been some

Women's health group speaks out

Assault ruling 'inadequate'

A BALLARAT women's health group and advocate for violence against women has described as "inadequate" the sentence of a Ballarat man who almost killed his pregnant girlfriend.

Speaking of Dean Speedie's community corrections order handed down by judge Liz Gaynor in the Melbourne County Court last week, Women's Health Grampians chief executive officer Patty Kinnerly said the "backwards" sentence would further hurt women suffering at the hands of abusive partners.

Speedie's former partner is lucky to be alive after the 2006 attack in which the Ballarat man kicked, punched and stomped on the head of his pregnant girlfriend.

He then fled arrest and remained

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on the run for more than seven years.

Crown prosecutors had called for Speedie's immediate imprisonment, but Judge Gaynor last week disagreed, saying had Speedie might not have offended if not on drugs at the time.

Ms Kinnerly said the sentence was a "complete reversal" of what Women's Health Grampians had been working towards for many years.

"There is never an excuse for violence against women," Ms Kinnerly said.

"This message says to the community, 'look it's all right if you assault your partner, as long as you're under the influence of

drugs or alcohol at the time'.

"Where does the line get drawn then? Is it OK if you've lost your job? Is it OK if you've just lost your house in a fire? There is never an excuse."

Sentencing Speedie to a three-year corrections order, including 300 hours of community work, Judge Gaynor said she was "satisfied" the offending took place because of Speedie's intake of drugs and alcohol.

Speedie, 34, had been a drug addict since 13 and was affected by alcohol and the drug Xanax when he assaulted his partner.

Ms Kinnerly said the outcome would cause women suffering abuse to think twice about reporting it.