



Beams Falling

P.M. Newton

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They think Ned's Vietnamese heritage is the right fit but nothing in Cabra can be taken at face value. Ned doesn't speak the language and the ra choi – the lawless kids who have 'gone out to play' – are just running rings around her. The next blow could come from anywhere, or anyone. And beyond the headlines and hysteria, Ned is itching to make a play for the kingpin, the person behind it all with the money and the plan and the power.

Beams Falling is the brilliantly compelling and gritty second novel by the rising star of Australian crime writing. A portrait of our recent past, it's also a compulsive and utterly authentic insight into the way both cops and criminals work.

Beams Falling Details

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From Reader Review Beams Falling for online ebook

Karen says

When THE OLD SCHOOL was released all the way back in 2010, I noted "As I was reading this book I couldn't help but create a checklist of the things that make up seriously good crime fiction for me, and apply it as I went." Every box ticked needless to say, which means that the follow up has been much anticipated. It doesn't disappoint in any single way.

As with the first book we've got a very good plot, with Kelly returned from sick leave, and on light duties. Still in physical rehab her mental recovery also gets some attention, as she struggles to cope with the PTSD symptoms which overwhelm her life and her relationships. Whilst she's battling those demons, and stuck, supposedly, on office duties, her ethnicity means she's pulled, however reluctantly, into a number of investigations that intertwine into drugs, home invasions, violence and murder.

Kelly's own personal experience is visceral, raw, clear as a bell. An expose on what happens when a cop's life is endangered, threatened, turned upside down and what they have to do to get back on the job. There's some beautiful passages woven into the narrative that talk about the idea of dealing with flight or fight, and how "the job" means that bad must be confronted, must be dealt with.

"She wanted to run away. Every muscle, every nerve ending, urged her to. Instead she turned, sagging under the load she carried. This was why cops were cops. Instead of taking flight, they turned towards the fear."

"They'd had no past, no future. Just that moment, survival. 'We talked about the fight-or-flight response,'... Cynthia reckons we're stuck there, in that moment. We survived. It finished. But it's like our flight-or-fight switch is broken. We can't turn it off."

There is, however, absolutely no sense whatsoever of pity. Kelly's struggling. Angry, scared, confused. Regretful definitely, but pity is never to be seen. There's even distinct glimpses of hope. The tentative sense of attraction to another human being, albeit one who has seen his own share of pointless violence and despair. There's even some sense of forgiveness or at least acceptance of the part that other colleagues played in her injury, her past, present and future. Along the way there's other cops in trouble as well - this is not a one person character study. It's about the difficulties of the job as a whole.

It's also about the problems in immigrant communities. People who come from the worst possible circumstances, seeking hope and normality. How that pans out in subsequent generations, how the idea of always being an outsider, even when you're born here can have an impact. If nothing else BEAMS FALLING reminded this reader, yet again, that life is a tricky business and it doesn't matter where you come from or how you get here, it's what happens to you here and what you do about that, that matters.

Newton writes with an honesty and clarity that's both confronting and soothing. These characters suffer, they suffer a lot, and the scenario's they deal with are mucky and base and nasty and the worst of the worst. Some of them don't make it, but the ones who do survive, are battered and bruised but not always lessened by their experiences. There are points when you wonder how close to the truth BEAMS FALLING comes, and why on earth you'd get out of bed every morning and attempt to deal with it.

The first book in this series promised much, but BEAMS FALLING delivers so so much more.

Brenda says

Recovering from injury, Detective Nhu (Ned) Kelly has been transferred to Cabramatta Police Station. With her Vietnamese heritage, it was thought that she could help with the rampant violence which had erupted in the suburb. But Ned wasn't herself – her lack of control and deep fear was taking over her life and her workmates weren't helping. With her ongoing visits to counsellors and doctors, being put on light duties was frustrating – her sister being in another country doing her PhD meant she was alone with her thoughts and fears.

In the searing heat of one afternoon, a young school boy was shot dead in a brazen murder. With Ned at the scene, the horrors of her own attack hit her full force. But she knew she needed to find out who was responsible, and she needed to know why. Battling her own demons, her workmates and the Vietnamese drug gangs would take everything out of her; she was determined to find the answers – find her “normal”, find her “routine”. With the help of Cynthia and her damaged group, would her peace return?

As the investigation deepened, the teenage gang members continued to laugh at the cops, knowing they were one step ahead all the time; the heroin invasion along with the violence and murders meant the police needed to find a way to combat the lawlessness once and for all – but could they? Ned desperately needed to get to the criminal drug lord, but he was untouchable – wasn't he?

This is my first novel by this author and I think with the amount of confusion I felt for at least 40% of the book meant I should have read *The Old School* first. The lack of description regarding Ned's injuries and what occurred from her previous case and the identifying of workmates (from her previous case) made it frustrating; a little bit of background would have made the world of difference. I was disappointed with this one, which is a shame, but I will read *The Old School* when I can, as it has many great reviews.

With thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for my copy to read and review.

Catsalve says

I can't imagine what it was like to be a cop in Cabramatta in the early 90s - absolute hell, I suspect. Assigned there on light duties after being shot, Ned is tracking a murderer in the Vietnamese community. The community is closed & fearful, & no one is talking. Drugs have a habit of causing death, one way or another. Between Cabra & PTSD, Ned's not coping very well with life & work.

Newton's done a good job of showing the crippling effect PTSD can have on a person. For Ned, her recent trauma would be enough to cope with, but it's also brought back the trauma she experienced as a child when her father was shot down. Undealt with then, PTSD is debilitating her now.

Very well-written, I enjoyed this one almost as much as the first book, *The Old School*. I could ask for just a little more joy - they're all so damned miserable. There's a point in the book where some of the characters work out why they stick with the job, & that's all well and good, but if it's grinding you down so there's no

lightness in your life at all, what's left? That's traumatising in itself.

There's the tiniest little spark of hope with Ari, but I don't think it's enough, &, if there were another book, I'm sure that would go haywire too. That's it. There isn't another book. Why not? Is there ever going to be? Arrgh!

blurb:

On the inside, Detective Nhu 'Ned' Kelly is a mess. Stitched up after being shot, her brain's taking even longer to heal than her body. On the outside, though, she's perfect, at least as far as the top brass are concerned. Cabramatta is riding high on the new 'Asian crime wave', a nightmare of heroin, home invasions, and hits of all kinds, and the cops need a way into the world of teenaged dealers and assassins.

They think Ned's Vietnamese heritage is the right fit but nothing in Cabra can be taken at face value. Ned doesn't speak the language and the ra choi – the lawless kids who have 'gone out to play' – are just running rings around her. The next blow could come from anywhere, or anyone. And beyond the headlines and hysteria, Ned is itching to make a play for the kingpin, the person behind it all with the money and the plan and the power.

Beams Falling is the brilliantly compelling and gritty second novel by the rising star of Australian crime writing. A portrait of our recent past, it's also a compulsive and utterly authentic insight into the way both cops and criminals work.

P. M. Newton spent over a decade as a detective in the NSW police force, including time in Sydney's southwest and the Drug Enforcement Agency.

Kylie says

Returning to work after being shot, Detective Nhu 'Ned' Kelly finds herself transferred to Cabramatta as part of a crack down on the 'Asian crime wave'. But just because Ned looks the part doesn't mean she's welcomed, either by the community or by her colleagues. *Beams Falling* is PM Newton's slow-burning second novel, a study of the murky side of the police force and the damage done to those in the Job. Ned is a compelling character, ably escorting readers through Newton's intricate, gritty plot.

Rowena Holloway says

PM Newton's second novel is a rich portrayal of the thin blue ethical line and the toll it takes on those who seek to do good.

After her life is shattered by a shooting, Detective Nhu 'Ned' Kelly is desperate to get back to the normalcy of her job. She's good at it; there she knows who she is. Deemed unfit for the field, she is placed on desk duties with a new team in Cabramatta. Then the cold-blooded shooting of a schoolboy in broad daylight draws her back into the field where her trauma springs humiliatingly to life. Ned soon discovers Cabramatta is a community thick with desperate immigrants and those willing to exploit them, none of whom will talk to cops, that corruption isn't just on the streets, and that a word in the wrong ear can have devastating consequences.

Beams Falling resounds with pathos and veracity. It draws on Newton's experience as a police detective to provide a compelling portrait of Ned's struggle to find herself and her place in her altered life. It also reflects realistic policing. With no early clues, the investigation initially takes a backseat to Ned's mental distress and her difficulties with her new colleagues, most of whom don't welcome her presence. Those familiar with traditional crime novels, with a clue in almost every scene, may find the pace a little slow. There is, however, plenty to keep you interested until Ned gets a break in the case. Newton's writing is faultless and evocative. Her inspired observations ("a crocodile of school children") bring a great sense of place to the world Ned inhabits, and her pared-back portrayal of a woman on the brink is masterful.

Beams Falling showcases the breathtaking quality of Newton's prose and it is easy to become lost in this alone. Yet it is Ned's journey which makes this such a memorable novel.

Angela Savage says

Beams Falling by PM Newton is a powerful book that explores trauma and its legacy in the guise of a police procedural.

The central character is Detective Nhu 'Ned' Kelly, the child of an Anglo-Australian veteran and his Vietnamese wife who were killed in front of their children, their murders unsolved. Ned first appeared in Newton's award winning debut, *The Old School*, set in 1992, where her part in the investigation into bodies found on a Bankstown building site puts her on a collision course with ICAC (Independent Commission Against Corruption) police corruption inquiries.

Beams Falling is best read as a sequel, rather than a standalone. It opens with Ned dealing with the consequences of having been shot at the end of the previous book, her wound 'not yet a scar'. She is paranoid, hyper-alert, using whisky in a vain attempt to keep the nightmares at bay. Put on restricted duties, she finds herself transferred from Bankstown to Task Force Acorn, designed to investigate 'Asian crime'. Ned has been deployed to boost the number of Asians on the team, her superiors oblivious to the fact that she doesn't speak Vietnamese.

It's 1993 and Sydney's western suburb of Cabramatta, aka 'Vietnamatta', is the hub of the 'Asian crime wave' involving heroin, extortion, brothels and an army of disaffected teens caught between two cultures. Despite Acorn's wide brief, all roads seem to lead to Cabra.

When a school boy is shot at point blank range in broad daylight, Ned becomes involved in investigating his death. But her reflexes are shot. She dives for cover and pisses herself during an assassination in a Cabra pool hall, and only the intervention of her colleague Joe Ng, seconded to Acorn from the Royal Hong Kong Police, enables her to escape with her dignity intact. But neither Joe nor her Bankstown buddy TC will stand by when Ned so clearly needs help. She is referred to a psychologist who puts her in group therapy to help her deal with the consequences of successive severe traumas and find a new normal.

Beams Falling is an atypical crime novel, absorbing, rather than fast-paced, as much a psychological study and slice of social history as it is a police procedural -- all of which was part of its appeal for me.

While Ned's trauma is at the centre of the novel, the book casts light on multiple other traumas, including those experienced by the Vietnamese who migrated to Australia in the 1970s: from the physical trauma of

attacks at sea by pirates and the loss of loved ones to war and violence, to the psychological trauma of displacement and the loss of loved ones to other cultures and loyalties. Newton does this gently in the course of the story with evocative images and without preaching. The mother of the deceased at a funeral is described as 'deboned by grief'. Refugee women are said to hear in breaking waves 'the sound of lost husbands, children, honour, happiness, dignity.'

Comparisons with today's asylum seekers are inevitable, the trauma of the refugee experience a constant in the midst of shifting geopolitics.

The NSW police force is depicted as a dysfunctional family, who 'share nothing but secrets. Secrets that pressed behind the eyes like tumours.' Everyone is flawed. Most are compromised, at times breathtakingly so.

Given the author's 13 years on the Job, I don't doubt the veracity of this depiction. But I am left wondering why Ned is so determined to remain a cop, when there is little light and virtually no humour to temper the unrelenting cynicism she encounters.

Beams Falling is intense, intelligent and provocative, the kind of novel that plays on my mind, long after the final page is turned.

Alex Rogers says

A solid follow up to *The Old School*. I'm not generally a fan of "series", but Newton has written a solid and enjoyable second in the series which didn't feel formulaic or tired. The main character Nhu "Ned" Kelly is complex, interesting, and the local setting (Sydney / Cabramatta) made it more than usually interesting for me, and I imagine, a bit different to most readers from the US / UK detective novels. Very strong themes of historical damage being carried by most of the characters, with trauma from work, war, and just life impacting in all sorts of ways. The book is pretty dark, and shows Sydney at its uncaring worst, and it is hard to pick the villains from the victims - and those who refuse to be victims, or deliberately put themselves in harms way to protect others. A complex and enjoyable read, if a little confusing at times sorting out the multiplicity of characters, some of whom are better sketched than others. Probably better read in sequence, although it works as a stand alone as well.

Yvonne Perkins says

Beams Falling is the second book in the series about Detective Ned Kelly by P M Newton. Kelly is an Australian born woman of Vietnamese and Irish ancestry. Her parents were murdered many years ago when she was seven. It was an unsolved case but Kelly is involved in another murder case in the first book, *The Old School*, which turns out to be related to her parents murder. We don't find out who murdered her parents in that book but the case leaves Kelly with both personal as well as professional motives to pursue the small clues further.

This book commences just a few weeks after the first book left off. Ned Kelly has been physically and emotionally traumatised by the events that took place in the first book but is determined to get back to work.

She is transferred to Cabramatta and immediately finds herself immersed in investigating murders and drug rings. The book is set in 1993 at a time when the Independent Commission Against Corruption is conducting public hearings about police corruption.

This book explores the difficult moral tightrope the police are working on at the time. For many it is impossible to separate the personal from the professional. The ends of the investigation are so important that the means used to pursue a line of inquiry slip beyond the ethical - sometimes well beyond.

Underlying the story is another story depicting the destructiveness of war. The Vietnam War may have ended nearly twenty years before but the people of Cabramatta are still living the terrible consequences of all that happened so long ago. It reminds us that the history of a war is not just about the period of open hostilities. The history of a war must include the stories of those who had to live out the personal hostilities and dysfunction caused by war in their families and in their communities for years after the world mistakenly thought the war was over.

Newton excels in writing about place. Her books are not about the bells and sparkles facade that Sydney likes to parade to the rest of the world. They are about grungy Sydney, the real Sydney that most residents have to live in. There is no glamour here, but the truth of the parked car that expels over-heated, stale air when someone opens the door; the crowded train stations; the broken people; the ugly, unloved buildings of neglected suburbs.

Newton explores the dark recesses of post traumatic stress disorder and the insidious tentacles of police corruption. This book is grimy. In the first part of the book it is easy to be drawn into this dismal world with no obvious way for the characters to climb out of it. Newton demonstrates to the reader that there is no simple fix, no happy ever after. She makes the reader get a taste of the ground hog day the characters are in but just as the reader is starting to lose sympathy Newton provides her main character a life ring to cling to. It is not the magic cure, there is still a lot of work to do.

While exploring psychological trauma Newton always maintains narrative pace. Crisp scenes, at times closed abruptly just before they are concluded makes the reader want to know more. Newton is developing complex story lines in these books. It seems a shame that while *Beams Falling* took four years to write it took me just four days to read. It has left me wanting more but recognising that quality crime fiction takes time to construct.

This book is good, but for some it would not be bed-time reading. Newton sucks the reader into the world she constructs and it is so real that the reader can allow that world to envelope them and sink as some of the characters sink. This is not sanitised crime fiction written for light entertainment. Crime hurts and is destructive. Newton understands this and in portraying the world of crime in this way she shows respect to victims of crime and acknowledges the damage that has been done to them.

I recommend *Beams Falling* to all those who enjoy crime fiction. If you want to read this book you should make sure you read *The Old School* first (see my review at [Online Opinion](#)).

This review is my first review for The Australian Women Writers' Challenge in 2014.

Wal.li says

Sydney Police

Nach einer schweren Verletzung ist die Polizistin Ned Kelly, halb Australierin, halb Vietnamesin, noch in der Genesungsphase. Immer noch traumatisiert von der Schussverletzung, durch die sie fast umgekommen wäre, hält sie es doch nicht mehr aus. Sie ist heilfroh, dass wenigstens im leichten Dienst, also hauptsächlich im Innendienst, wieder arbeiten darf. Doch schon bald nachdem sie in einem Dezernat eingesetzt wird, wo man meint, sie wegen ihrer Herkunft besonders gut gebrauchen zu können, wird ein asiatischer Jugendlicher getötet. Ned, die kein Vietnamesisch spricht, versucht, den Hintergrund der Tat zu klären. Schwierig ist das schon für sie, denn gerade ihre psychische Genesung ist noch längst nicht abgeschlossen, sollte sie jemals mit dem Kapitel Frieden schließen können, vergessen wird sie es nie.

Die Handlung dieses Romans beginnt gleich mittendrin, kein Wunder, denn es handelt sich um den zweiten Band um Ned Kelly, der bisher erschienen ist. Die Autorin hat selbst als Polizistin in Sydney gearbeitet. Und auch ohne diese Kenntnis merkt man, dass sie weiß, wovon sie berichtet. Aus ihrem Wissen ist ein düsterer, aber sehr spannender Roman geraten, um die Verhältnisse und Strukturen innerhalb des Polizeiapparats. Aber auch um die Polizistin Ned Kelly, die vermeintlich gerade wegen ihrer Herkunft gebraucht wird. Während der Lektüre gelangt man allerdings zu der Auffassung, sie wird auch benutzt. Selbst noch kaum in der Lage, ihre Arbeit zu erledigen, hinter jeder Ecke Gefahr vermutend, ist es für Ned fast unmöglich herauszufinden, wem von ihren Kollegen sie trauen kann. Dennoch ringt sie um ihre Gesundheit, sowohl seelisch als auch körperlich verlangt sie sich einiges ab, um wieder fit zu werden.

Umrahmt von der packenden Krimihandlung im dunklen Teil des Milieus der asiatischen Einwanderer kann der Leser teilhaben, am Kampf der jungen Polizistin Ned Kelly um sich selbst. Wie schwer es ist nach einer Verwundung im Dienst, wieder auf die Beine zu kommen. Da macht die schwierige körperliche Wiederherstellung eher den kleineren Teil aus. Doch von den Kollegen auch noch misstrauisch beäugt zu werden und dennoch Teil der Familie zu sein, eine schwierige Situation, in der es gilt sich durchzuboxen. Gespannt folgt man Neds Weg durch das Dickicht aus Verbrechen, dessen Ranken bis in die Reihen der Polizei zu reichen scheinen.

Shelleyrae at Book'd Out says

Beams Falling by Pamela Newton follows her lauded 2010 debut, The Old School, featuring Detective Nhu 'Ned' Kelly.

Following the shooting that left Kelly wounded and a corrupt police officer dead (in The Old School), she is shunted from her Bankstown unit to Taskforce Acorn in Cabramatta, the token Asian officer on a team investigating the area's criminal activity. Though officially restricted to light duties, Ned is drawn into the investigation of a brazen shooting of a schoolboy, which leads the team into the world of the 'ra choi' - teen hitmen, drug mules, dealers and thieves, corrupted by easy money and the illusion of power.

The gritty plot reveals a confronting mire of crime, including murder, drugs and prostitution, tainting the Sydney suburb. Newton doesn't pull any punches, twelve year old boys are assassinated in broad daylight

and fourteen year old girls are raped in front of their fathers as object lessons. The violence is brutal and dispiriting and the solution an enigma.

The investigating police are hindered in their brief by language and cultural barriers, part of which Ned is supposed to address based on her half Vietnamese ethnicity. Frustration with their lack of progress pushes some to manipulate circumstances in the hope that the means will justify the end, despite the threat of ICAC.

Newton's exploration of trauma is as compelling as the police investigation. Though her physical wounds are healing, Kelly is struggling with the psychological impact of being shot and Newton's portrayal of Ned's distress is raw and affecting. Kelly is hyper-alert, fearful and barraged by flashbacks of both past and recent trauma yet determined to deny her PTSD, until she is forced into group therapy after a humiliating incident.

Though this novel can be read as a stand-alone, I regret I didn't have the opportunity to read *The Old School* before the release of *Beams Falling*. I found *Beams Falling* to be powerful, gripping and authentic crime fiction offering complex plot and characters. I really hope we won't have to wait another four years for the next installment.

Carol - Reading Writing and Riesling says

My View:

Portrait of Post-Traumatic Stress in an authentic police setting...and so many other things.

Firstly I was very impressed with the authentic voice of this police procedural and the harrowing accuracy of PTSD as it is presented in this narrative; life constantly on alert, hyper vigilant, hyper alert, anxious, breathless, paranoia...panic. I could feel this disorder blossoming in my mind and chest as I read on, the descriptions so real.

Newton has a brilliant way with words- her descriptions of settings so accurate you can smell the markets, the dirty back streets, and the decay... the incense burning. Her dialogues flow easily and comfortably, the camaraderie of the Job clearly evident.

Detective Nhu "Ned" Kelly is a wonderful female protagonist – she is complex, likable, stressed, determined and compassionate and she is good at her job – just a little messed up with "head noises" at the moment but she will work through that. I loved the inclusion of the Buddhist nun who plays a small yet important role in this narrative and that of Detective Joe "Nug" Ng. Other characters along the way are well developed, not always likeable, not always what you expect.

The narrative itself is complex- so many issues are woven in this web of deceit, crime and recovery. They are subtly painted into the picture, you do not feel you are being lectured but this novel does make you think; about war, about detention centres, about family, about gangs, drugs, abuse, ethnic violence, and home invasions to name just a few issues. After I finished reading this I could not sleep for hours – not because I was fearful but because I was thinking. Not everything is black and white, right or wrong, not everyone is either guilty or innocent; so many shades of grey. There are so many individual circumstances to be considered. I could never be a cop; I think the lines are too blurry for me.

All in all this was a great Australian narrative, full of Sydney settings – dirty and clean – you see it all. Great characters, personal dilemmas, ethical challenges and a complex plot that reaches out to you and says "look

at the bigger picture whilst acknowledging the impact on the individual.“ The author has used a brilliant reference for this title in a story told by Sam Spade in *The Maltese Falcon*; it is poignant and such an accurate reflection on life (no spoilers here). A great read!

PS

I loved the inclusion of the dog in the therapist room.

Some background on P M Newton from her website:

P.M. Newton is a Sydney based crime writer.

The Old School, featuring Detective Nhu “Ned” Kelly, published by Penguin in 2010 is her first novel.

Short biographical details can be found at Penguin.

Random details include a 13 year career in the NSW Police, the majority of which was spent as a Detective. Over the years I worked a variety of criminal investigation roles, from being one of many in an office of suburban Ds to the lone D in country NSW, taking in attachments to a variety of specialist squads along the way. From the outside, being a D looks glamorous, up close it involves a lot more paperwork than any one imagines, and eventually, for me, it started to resemble “Groundhog Day”. I’ve often described it as a job where you are constantly meeting people for the first time on the worst day of their lives – and quite often those people see you as being the cause of it.

So, I jumped ship and decided to see if there was a happier way to live. My journeys since have seen me in Mali, West Africa, listening to and writing about the music that pours out of that stretch of the Sahel. I was lucky enough to have my words and photographs published on CD liner notes by Sterns African Music label and in a travel magazine. Then there were a few years in India, studying Buddhist philosophy and teaching English to Tibetan refugees, and some very naughty little monks. It was whilst living in India that the character of Nhu “Ned” Kelly, first made her appearance in my head then eventually into notebooks and finally into *The Old School*.

Brian Stoddart says

In her acknowledgements, P.M.Newton makes an intriguing comment about the difficulties of writing a second novel, which suggests that this was a hard graft after her wonderful first one. *The Old School*

Some of that shows, mainly in the struggle between the storyline and the development of the character, DC Nhu "Neddy" Kelly who is recovering from the shooting that ended the first book, and coming to terms with herself. The storyline disappears a little in the first half of the book or so, then wraps up in the last third in a way that works but is perhaps a little laboured.

But the "Ned" character works brilliantly: a taut, troubled, Australian-Vietnamese woman with a troubled past and personality coming to terms with the workplace of the NSW cops in the 1990s.

This is still a great book, and it is likely that the third will overcome all the difficulties encountered in writing the second

Craig Sisterson says

A tainted Sydney suburb simmers to vicious life, full of murk and menace, as Detective Nhu 'Ned' Kelley returns in PM Newton's sophomore crime thriller. The follow-up to 2010's brilliant *The Old School* sees the part-Vietnamese cop struggling to recover from the finale of that book, her body and mind scarred and torn.

A hero in the eyes of the top brass, if not all her colleagues, Nhu is tabbed for light duties as the token Asian officer on a task force investigating Cabramatta's immigrant population; part of the 'war on drugs'. Politics, power, and personalities swirl as the cops scramble to investigate a daylight hit on a schoolboy. Violence lurks where the *ra choi* rule; teenage thieves, drug dealers, and killers roaming the streets. Nhu secretly wants to springboard an investigation towards Old Man Liu, an elderly kingpin long marked for her own vengeance, but instead can barely stay afloat amongst her own wounds, historic and new.

Beams Falling is a superb novel that is as much about trauma and healing, corruption and cleansing, as it is about solving a mystery. World class crime writing, set Downunder.

Lily Mulholland says

I enjoyed this book but not as much as *Old School*, which was a fantastic read. Nhu is a great character but she was a bit passive in this story, which had a large number of characters that weren't perhaps as interesting as those in *Old School*. The story felt a bit 'thick' for me, I had to work hard in parts as a reader to track what was happening. However, I want to stick with Nhu. She's a complex, fragile but resilient female character in a male-dominated world. I'm on her side and I want to read more of her. I hope PM Newton continues her journey. Publishing note: titles are always tricky. I wondered the whole way through why this book was called '*Beams Falling*' - it's not as punchy or as memorable a title as '*Old School*'. The reason was revealed at the end and reinforced my feeling that things were allowed to happen to Nhu and she was powerless to stop them. I hope Nhu gets to be more active in the next book.

Liz says

Beams Falling is PM Newton's follow-up to the excellent *The Old School*, in which Detective Nhu (Ned) Kelly took on corruption within the police force and came perilously close to the truth about her parents' murders into the bargain.

The sequel starts with Ned fighting to return to work - and to find out who was responsible for her parents' deaths. When she's shunted out to Cabramatta as a token Asian officer just before the apparently senseless murder of a young boy, she again becomes embroiled in corruption and the complications of duty, with problems this time coming (mostly) from the other side of the police tape.

The book paints a vivid picture of Cabramatta in the early nineties, almost a failed state in which many members of the police force seem comfortable letting the various gangs and dealers duke it out among themselves, regardless of how many innocents get in the way. Newton's descriptions of some of the awful situations characters have faced, since before they even arrived in Australia, offer a counterpoint to this view - not to mention a reminder of the plight of refugees attempting to gain access to Australia today.

There's also what feels like a very realistic portrayal of PTSD and the ways those affected deal with it. In fact, the entire book could be viewed as an examination of how characters from all walks of life deal with the bad hands they are given: some of them retain their integrity, such as it is; most don't, and who are we to judge them for this?

I loved *The Old School*, and recommend reading it first if you haven't already, but to me *Beams Falling* is a grittier, more mature book, deeper on several levels than its predecessor. Highly recommended, and I'm looking forward to more from Nhu and PM Newton.
