

MEDIA RELEASE

Minister for Community Services
Minister for Women
The Hon. Linda Burney MP



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RUGBY LEAGUE SUCCESSFULLY TACKLING VIOLENCE

Tackling Violence, the NSW Government's Rugby League anti-domestic violence program, is kicking goals in reducing violence among participating clubs, Minister for Community Services and Women Linda Burney today said on International Day of Non-Violence.

"The UN declared International Day of non-Violence is a day where we can reflect on the unacceptability of violence, particularly violence against women," Ms Burney said.

"Alarmingly, about one in three Australian women is physically assaulted and one in five is sexually assaulted over their lifetime."

Ms Burney, who initiated and is leading *Tackling Violence*, reported that of the 230 players who signed up to program, only one breached the code of conduct.

"This weekend's Koori Knockout in Armidale marks the culmination of the first season of the *Tackling Violence* program. This year only one player signed up to *Tackling Violence* breached the code of conduct. This player was charged with a domestic violence assault," Ms Burney said.

"The Australian Rugby League (ARL) believes that *Tackling Violence* contributed to fewer appearances by participating teams before the judiciary this year, compared to 2008.

"Clubs have said the program has inspired the players to be more disciplined during training, games and in their off-field behaviour.

"The Government is evaluating the program and plans to run it again next footy season."

Chris Curtain, secretary of the Tingha Tigers – premiers of the Group 19 A Grade and Reserve Grade competitions – said the players' commitment to *Tackling Violence* has brought a new level of discipline to their approach to football.

"I think this season has been one of the best for the club in overall discipline and commitment from the players. The players want to win and they have gone after the Premiership from game one, no doubt," Mr Curtain said.

"The profile of the club was raised by *Tackling Violence* and the commitment of the players to be role models in the community has helped the team stay focussed. I'm proud of the way they've conducted themselves throughout the season both on and off the field."

"This has been a very successful program with a strong message that domestic violence will not be tolerated," New England Crime Manager, Detective Inspector Greig Stier said.

"The Tingha Tigers set a standard in behaviour and attitude that young men in this community can look to and emulate."

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Ms Burney said *Tackling Violence* is delivered in partnership with the ARL, Mudgin-Gal Aboriginal Women's Corporation, National Indigenous TV and the National Rugby League, with support from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Office for Women, Attorney General's and the Department of Arts, Sport and Recreation.

"The Government invested more than \$200,000 in the program. Six regional and rural Rugby League clubs were given \$5,000 sponsorship each to run local campaigns to reduce domestic violence and raise awareness of the issue in their local communities," she said.

"Over 200 players and club officials took part in domestic violence education workshops so that they understand that domestic violence is a serious crime and have the knowledge to talk about domestic violence with authority and lead by example in their communities".

Tackling Violence required players to:

- abide by a code of conduct with penalties should a player commit a domestic violence related offence
- wear the *Let's Tackle Domestic Violence* badge on their jerseys and display signage at their home games
- participate in domestic violence education workshops run by Mudgin-Gal
- feature in a radio and TV anti-domestic violence campaign throughout the season.

The six clubs that took part in *Tackling Violence* were Tingha Tigers in the Northern Tablelands, Lower Clarence Magpies on the NSW North Coast, Dubbo Cymys and Macquarie Raiders, Western Sydney's Windsor Wolves and the Bay and Basin United Sharks on the south coast.

"Violence against women is abhorrent. Today, on International Day of Non-Violence, we should all think about how we can continue to work together to prevent violence, protect women and make our communities safer. *Tackling Violence* is one initiative which is proving to be very successful," Ms Burney said.

Media contact: Anh Dang 9228 4455 / 0427 783 208