



**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Clean Slate program continues to kick goals**

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An innovative rehabilitation program will score another try today when a NSW inmate will play in a major rugby league grand-final for the first time in Australian history.

Acura 'Junior' Niuqila, 32, who is serving a sentence at Long Bay Correctional Complex, will take to the field for the Redfern All Blacks against the Coogee Randwick Wombats at Redfern Oval this afternoon for the South Sydney District Junior Rugby League grand final.

Long Bay Correctional Complex General Manager Pat Aboud said the initiative was an extension of the Redfern Clean Slate Without Prejudice program, founded by Aboriginal community organisation Tribal Warrior and Redfern Police Superintendent Luke Freudenstein.

The program helps prepare inmates for release into the community to address reoffending risks and provide an example of successful rehabilitation for local Aboriginal youth.

"Some people deserve a second chance and Junior has earned our trust and needs to start preparing for his life back in the community," Mr Aboud said.

"Junior has a talent for the game and is a big part of the local Redfern community. This gives him a clean slate."

Junior said the support from Corrective Services NSW staff and his community has been enormous.

"I'm very grateful to be playing a game I love. This program is a big part of my rehabilitation," Junior said.

"This is an opportunity for me to give back to the community and teach the young kids what not to do."

First Class Correctional Officer Peter Shiraz along with Mr Aboud and Correctional Officer Jody Dreoni volunteer their time to escort Junior to training and the matches.

"Before training, Junior is reminded of the conditions he must obey when he is outside. Junior understands he must behave, as it's a very rare opportunity," Mr Shiraz said.

"The program is about getting inmates ready for release. After walking out the gates, Junior will be prepared so he won't come back."

Some inmates participate in a boxing program while others are trained to receive their commercial boating licence as part of the Clean Slate program.

Tribal Warrior CEO Shane Phillips said the program helped break the mould, with crime in Redfern dramatically reduced since it began.

"The inmates learn a routine. They become skilled up in a trade and give back to their community," Mr Phillips said.

"Police and CSNSW have been great in helping facilitate this program, which will have an effect on intergenerational change."