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**Rugby League player suspended for attempting to use prohibited substances he ordered on Internet**

The Sports Tribunal suspended rugby league player, Darren Reiri, for 2 years for attempted use of, and possession of, a prohibited substance he ordered over the Internet from India.

Drug Free Sport New Zealand (DFS) filed Anti-Doping Proceedings against Darren Reiri on 6 October 2014. A provisional suspension order was made on 29 October. The Tribunal held the substantive hearing at night on 4 December, to suit the parties' availability, and issued its decision the next day on 5 December.

Mr Reiri admitted the violations. In May 2013 he ordered the prohibited substance Anastrozole from a website in India. A package of tablets was dispatched to him but intercepted by Customs and referred to Medsafe who sent a letter to Mr Reiri advising the package had been intercepted. Mr Reiri didn't respond to the letter and in July 2013 re-ordered tablets from the website. This second package was also intercepted. Medsafe then referred the matter to DFS.

Under the Sports Anti-Doping Rules, the penalty is 2 years' suspension. However, if Mr Reiri could establish how the substance came into his possession and that he didn't intend to enhance his sports performance, he was eligible for a lesser penalty.

The main issue was whether Mr Reiri could show he didn't intend to enhance his sports performance. Mr Reiri said he had been playing less rugby league, was concentrating more on working out in the gym and had decided to get bigger and more muscular. A friend advised him to use Anastrozole and gave him the supplier's details. Mr Reiri said that he knew Anastrozole was supposed to enhance athletic performance but bought it to use in the gym not to become a better rugby league player. He said his sole aim was to use it for "cosmetic purposes", that he wanted to get bigger and stronger and didn't give a "second thought" to whether any improvements he could make in the gym would benefit his rugby league activities.

The Tribunal agreed with DFS' position that: an objective consideration of the circumstances and asking whether Mr Reiri took the substance to raise the level of his performance in sport was required; intent to cheat or not was irrelevant; the focus was on the connection between possession of the substance and performance in sport; and it was artificial to segregate performance improvement in body building from performance improvement in rugby league where becoming bigger and stronger would improve performance in either activity.

The Tribunal concluded Mr Reiri fell short of establishing he didn't intend to enhance his sport performance. It said:

*Objectively viewed the explanations are not persuasive especially when Mr Reiri persisted with his attempted acquisition after his first try was foiled by Medsafe. His failure to seek advice or check his position is inexcusable. He appeared to be willing to rely on the say so of a friend who he did not want to identify but with regard to who Mr Reiri told the investigator the friend had told him "it was a good performance enhancing drug". Mr Reiri had a long involvement in the sport and a clear duty to be cautious. While because of his age and new priorities his degree of involvement in rugby league was lessening, the obligations remained even if it was for him more of a hobby than a sport.*

The Tribunal therefore suspended Mr Reiri for 2 years.

The Tribunal ordered the 2 year suspension period start from 1 February 2014 to take account of the substantial delay in the matter being referred to the Tribunal.

The decision in this case is available for download from the website of the Sports Tribunal ([www.sportstribunal.org.nz](http://www.sportstribunal.org.nz)). See *Drug Free Sport New Zealand v Darren Reiri* (ST 10/14). Copies can also be obtained directly from Brent Ellis, Registrar, Sports Tribunal of New Zealand (telephone: 0800 55 66 80; e-mail: [info@sportstribunal.org.nz](mailto:info@sportstribunal.org.nz)).