



Eels introduce in-house plan to stamp out domestic violence

» MICHAEL CARAYANNIS

Parramatta is to become the first sporting club in Australia to launch an in-house domestic violence action plan.

The Eels are close to finalising the plan that will see players, staff and fans educated in stamping out family violence. It comes after the Eels became the first Sydney-based rugby league club to launch a reconciliation action plan last year.

Parramatta chief executive Scott Seward said his club would play an important role in helping rid the community of domestic violence.

"Our club is committed to taking a strong stand against family violence and using our influence to respond positively to this important community issue," Seward said. "This plan will commit our players, coaches and staff along with our members and supporters to a set of principles designed to take the issue of family and domestic violence seriously. We will be ensuring they are all aware and supportive of the initiative.

"I would like to see every NRL club write their own domestic violence action plans. In fact, I think every club in Australia should come on board. It's time we all took a stand."

The NRL has had its fair share of domestic violence issues in recent years, including incidents involving North Queensland's Robert Lui and South Sydney's Kirisome Auva'a. But clubs are starting to throw their weight behind education programs designed to stop domestic violence.

The Bulldogs have a partnership with White Ribbon and will spread the White Ribbon message to

schools and community groups around Sydney, hoping to provide the tools to help those who are affected by domestic violence.

Parramatta's plan will be developed with the help of long-term ABC broadcaster Charlie King, who leads the NO MORE campaign and played an important part in helping the Eels establish its reconciliation plan.

King said the involvement of sporting club was key.

"It's about talking to sporting clubs about reducing family violence," he said. "Clubs always talk about standing up for something.

What we're asking for is for all sporting clubs around Australia to write up a domestic violence action plan.

"We want them to outline what they stand for in relation to that."

The initiative coincides with the Eels' four-year partnership with the Northern Territory government, which includes the staging of games in the region.

A host of sporting clubs in the Northern Territory have developed their own domestic violence action plan with great success, King said.

"Some clubs have in their plan that any player who is found to have committed an act of violence against a member of their family is automatically stood down from playing," he said.

"This is not about proving innocence or guilt. They can only come back and play for that club if they address the playing group and tell them what's happened and tell them they have an understanding about how they are feeling about it."

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Committed: Parramatta boss Scott Seward. Photo: Anthony Johnson