Eels want Territory deal to go on

John Boulous
EELS CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

PARKAMATTA Eels chief executive officer John Boulous wants the deal between the Eels and the NT Government to be renewed.

Boulous arrived in Darwin this week for stakeholder meetings and said the ball was in the Government’s court to renew the deal.

“We’ll be guided by the Government,” Boulous said.

“They’re under no illusions; they know we’d love to renew.

“We hope they feel the same.”

Parramatta Eels played a 20-20 draw with the Gold Coast Titans at Anzac Oval on February 13.

Boulous emphasised his club’s desire for a long-term relationship but said the NT Government would have the final say.

“We are very happy with our partnership with the Territory to help grow the game,” he said.

“We’re delighted with the presence we’ve been able build in the Territory and we’d like to continue to grow that and strengthen that.”

Boulous was in Darwin for “a routine visit”, but discussed the terms with new Minister for Sport and Recreation Nathan Barrett.

Boulous said the deal – a multimillion-dollar deal in its third of four years – was about building the Eels’ brand beyond western Sydney.

“(The current) deal goes to 2017. Obviously we’d love a renewal in time, but more important is working on the success of developing the partnership so (renewing) becomes a natural step,” Boulous said.

“We’re comfortable with the current elements of the deal.”

Barrett agreed the deal was beneficial for both parties.

“The Parramatta Eels are one of the most recognisable sporting brands in the world and to have them playing in Alice Springs and Darwin is a major coup for all Territorians and especially the kids who dream of playing NRL,” Barrett said.

“This partnership proves to young Territorians that playing in the NRL is a very achievable goal and it provides a clear pathway and platform for them to follow their dreams and work towards their goals.”

The Parramatta Eels have a massive membership and supporter base, both in Australia and internationally and their presence in Darwin will generate invaluable exposure for the NT across Australia and the world for the Territory.”

Boulous said the club, and its players, enjoyed the extra-curricular activities of their visits, including clinics, community and schools visits.

“From our point of view it (a new deal) is something we’d love to do for continuity,” he said.

“It’s important with any partnership to grow long-term, not just quick deal. It takes time to develop and we’re committed to that and we hope the Government is similar.”

The Eels are hoping to get more than simply sponsorship dollars back, with an eye for more NT products wearing the blue and gold in the future.

Katherine’s Luke Kelly is a regular A-grade player, while Nightcliff Dragons junior Abel Shirley is in the Eels’ Under-20 squad.

“Our talent pathways (staff) work closely with the institute program up here,” Boulous said of NT player development.

“We’ve seen some young kids come down and there are players being identified in the Territory, but it’s certainly something we’d like to see grow in the future.”

“Territory kids, hopefully, grow up aspiring to be Parramatta players.”

“A foothold in the Territory gives us a strong advantage.”

Boulous admitted he didn’t want the Eels to be at the mercy of becoming a political football with the impending election.

“I hope it’s a very long partnership, so the kids that have started to follow Parramatta get a regular partnership for years to come,” he said.