

Panthers look to New Zealand for lift

Eagle given all-clear

**ROGER VAUGHAN
MELBOURNE**

SOUTH Adelaide is poised to sign a 21-year-old New Zealander as the club's first international project player. Campbell Rawson is a 180cm winger who has played just half a season of Australian football in Auckland.

Last week he returned to New Zealand after a fortnight of pre-season training and a trial game with the Panthers.

South Adelaide football manager Neil Sharpe said the club was still in discussions with Rawson about work and living arrangements but he should be available for selection early in the season. It is expected he



**REECE
HOMFRAY**

under-20 side against a Victorian under-18 team.

Rawson is set to become the second New Zealander to join an SANFL list recently alongside 18-year-old Liam Auckland at Glenelg. Auckland played one game for Glenelg's under-18s last year but after a full pre-season, broke his jaw in a weekend trial game. AFLNZ has been going for 10 years and runs a 16-club competition from August to December.

Chief executive Robert Vanstam said its priority was developing the game across the country and sending its best young talent to an AFL list. Hawthorn has been the most active club in nurturing New Zealand talent with Kiwis Trent Crood, Shane Savage and Brent Remouf on its list.

The club also signed 15-year-old New Zealander Kurt Headenby to an international scholarship.

"The ultimate aim is to make AFL a New Zealand sport," Vanstam said. "We've got a strong focus on junior development. Currently we've got double the number (numbers) than seniors and by the end of the year it will be 10 times the amount. If we can get them on an AFL list it's a fantastic marketing tool for us."

Vanstam said if the SANFL could assist players reaching the top level, he would support it. "We'd like to hold our best players back for AFL scholarships. But guys like Campbell who want to play a lot of footy, that's (SANFL) the way to go. "I can see a pathway there and if there's interest in our players, then great."

SANFL state league manager Darren Chandler welcomed the arrival of New Zealanders to the competition.

"If they have the desire to play at the highest level and the SANFL can provide an opportunity, we're delighted," he said.



HOPING TO KICK-ON: Kiwi Aussie rules footballer Campbell Rawson who may sign with South Adelaide.

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would work his way through South's reserves.

"He'd played footy over there and was keen to come here and see how far he could take it," Sharpe said. "It's fair to say it (recent trial game) was a bit more competitive than he was used to but he certainly wasn't intimidated by the company."

"His skills were good - he kicks the ball on both sides of his body."

Rawson - who has a golf handicap of one - grew up playing various football codes before joining AFLNZ's University Rules Football Club.

Last year he was best-on-ground for New Zealand's

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