

Davis and Krakauer return to Collingwood



Andrew Krakouer and Leon Davis during their time at Collingwood

By Michael Gleeson
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Collingwood have reconciled with their former Indigenous stars Leon Davis and Andrew Krakouer, with the pair returning to the club.

After speaking to members of the board about their personal experiences of racism in their playing days at the club, the pair both agreed to return in full-time roles working on developing a culturally safe environment for staff and players at the Magpies.

“I’m pleased to be back,” said Davis, a much loved player by Collingwood fans and the longest-serving indigenous player in Collingwood history.

Davis and Krakouer had joined with former teammate Heritier Lumumba in taking action against Collingwood over the racism they had suffered at the club as outlined in the *Do Better* report.

In April this year Lumumba said on Twitter the trio would not engage in the club’s truth telling exercise and were terminating communications with the club. Davis separately confirmed that Lumumba had spoken for the three of them but did not comment further.

Sources said board member Jodie Sizer was significant in quietly contacting the players and convincing them to re-engage with the club. Taryn Lee, who as social impact and policy general manager has been highly rated for her work implementing the Do Better report, was also important in helping the players reconnect with the club.

The players had the opportunity to speak with members of the club board and will now be involved in the official truth telling program.

“I have shared that I have experienced instances of racism in my playing days,” Davis said.

“Unfortunately, these instances weren’t my first as I have experienced racism from a very young age. So too have members of my family and hearing my father’s stories of racism and what he experienced is something that drives me to make change and ensure we all do better.

“This is a community issue, a nation-wide issue, and ultimately a world issue and we must do better to stop racism. I am pleased to have a role where I am now encouraged to implement and drive cultural change and know I have the full support of all those at the club in doing so.

“I want to use my experiences of racism to better educate the community and better equip everyone with the knowledge, tools and education around our country’s true history and why we still face the issues we do in today’s society.

“We have the oldest living culture in the world and I encourage everyone to take it upon themselves to delve into that and to learn more about it.”

Krakouer said he and Davis were both eager to have a role in implementing change.

“I want my community to be strong and to be proud and I want the game of Australian Football – the game I love – to be welcoming of First Nations people at all times, on and off the field and in the stands,” Krakouer said.

“I want us to keep striving to be better.”

Club president Jeff Browne said the club was determined the sins of the past would not be repeated.

“The Collingwood Football Club remains absolutely committed to listening and learning from all players and staff – past and present – to ensure past mistakes are not repeated,” Browne said.

“Racism is never OK and we will continue to listen and learn from both former players – we apologise for the racism they both suffered – and we look forward to their input which will be invaluable to the club.

“The hurt racism causes runs deeper than the individuals involved so I want to thank both Leon and Andrew for speaking up about their experiences – it can be incredibly difficult for people who experience racism to share it and speak about it.

“We are extremely grateful to have Leon and Andrew reconnecting and returning to the club as employees to help continue to embed the cultural learning and practices across all 156 athletes in our club, our staff and the wider Collingwood community and we look forward to having them commence in those roles immediately.

“As a club, to go back and reflect on where we got things wrong, and to understand the perspective of the persons who have been impacted, is vitally important.”

Davis played 225 games in 12 seasons at the Magpies, kicking 270 goals, and was All-Australian in his final season. He earned a premiership medal playing in the 2010 grand final draw, but he did not play in the replay. Krakouer played 35 games for the Magpies, including the 2011 grand final, in his three seasons at the club. He won AFL mark of the year in 2011.

He also played 105 games for Richmond.