



By George Stavroulakis

MAX BURGESS ONE-YEAR CONTRACT WITH WELLINGTON PHOENIX

NPL star Max Burgess is back in the A-League after earning a one-year contract with Wellington Phoenix.

The former Sydney FC and Newcastle Jets player enjoyed a standout season with 2018 NPL NSW champions Sydney Olympic this year, scoring seven goals in 23 appearances.

A preseason clash with Wellington got him over the line with Nix coach Mark Rudan who said the Australian was in the mix for their A-League opener against the Jets.

"He has tasted Hyundai A-League experience before but I feel that he has plenty more to show" Rudan said.

"We have the perfect environment for him to develop and show that true potential he holds. I'm looking forward to having his attributes and his hard work ethic within the squad."

Burgess began his career at Rockdale City Suns shortly after Rudan left as head coach. It was at the New South Wales club that his talent was recognised by Sydney FC, who then brought him in to their Youth Academy. He made his first senior start for the club in the 2014/15



season before signing for the Newcastle Jets for the remainder of the campaign. After a few appearances for the Hunter outfit he returned to the Sky Blues as part of their youth and FFA Cup Squad. Burgess, who signed for Portuguese LigaPro side Uni o in 2017 before lining

up for Sydney Olympic FC, said he was "determined" to make his mark with Phoenix.

"When I heard of the interest, I jumped at the chance and with the encouragement I have received from Mark Rudan, I can't wait to get started."

FIFA: Why isn't there a second division in Australia?

Former strategist and co-founder of the Australian Association of Football Clubs (AAFC) Tom Kalas says the A-League model created by the PFA and FFA was flawed and ignored the grassroots.

It's been a dramatic ascension for the AAFC who in the space of 13 months have announced a proposal to introduce a national second tier and are now part of the ongoing congress discussions. When FIFA handed down their Terms of Reference for the Congress Review Working Group last week it stated the AAFC be included whenever the representation of NPL clubs in football governance structures were discussed. Kalas was in the room when FIFA came to Australia last year to help sort the ongoing Congress malaise and said the world governing body were surprised Australian football had only one professional tier.

"The first question FIFA asked us (the AAFC) in August last year was why there wasn't a second division in Australia?" he told

FourFourTwo.

"We explained that it's because fundamentally the FFA have built a closed private franchise model that has by its very nature and structure, inhibited a second division like other countries have.

"Our code's administrators instead of focusing on building assets such as facilities, and boutique stadiums and growing football culture, instead have blown hundreds of millions of dollars over the past 14 years on a very expensive first division model whose only beneficiaries are the small number of professional players paid to play in the A-League."

Kalas explained how the PFA and FFA model designed in 2004 had massive repercussion for the game below the A-League.

"The Member Federation

administration costs, player costs, stadium costs are out of wack to the level of our code's current evolution," he said.

"On top of that we have starved the tiers below with no transfer fees, no linkages (promotion/relegation) and allowed an atrophy to occur which will bite us all in years to come."

Last week FIFA stated that the AAFC be part of the discussions relating to NPL clubs in Congress Review Working Group and Kalas lauded the organisation board and chairman Rabie Krayem for their work.

"We are extremely elated that within 12 months we are now fully recognised by FIFA and the AFC. People don't realise how significant that is," he said.

"We have been formally and properly recognised with institutional integrity



and we are certainly on our way to becoming congress members and at this stage we are going to be consulted regarding on what they are doing to resolve these issues." "The AAFC have been doing great work including roadshows, multiple meetings with State Federations and the FFA on pushing the issues that need to be addresses regarding football reform.

"Particularly around improving the NPL, forming

a second division and the cost of junior football participation.

"More importantly the AAFC are being consulted across this journey and they are meeting with FFA and their key executives to help identify issues in the NPL that need to be addressed such as to reduce the cost of kids participation and help remodel some key aspects."

While the AAFC is working with the FFA, Kalas wants

to see a roadmap for when all the football pyramid is connected from the top to the grassroots.

"Where is a timeline?" he asked.

"FFA produced a 20-year plan, then a four-year plan but the most critical aspect that will assist in growing the game against a concentrated attack by rival codes is a timeline that will link all the tiers.

"That very act will promote the upgrade of facilities and create the incentives to build new ones thereby securing our games future in a rapidly expanding population.

"I think people now understand what the repercussions are of the flawed Australian football model, I only hope we move quickly to fix it as the future generations will bemoan the legacy we have left them".