

RL: Richardson doubts Juniors will take over football club

By Adrian Proszenko

SYDNEY, Nov 8 AAP - South Sydney CEO Shane Richardson says the wealthy Souths Juniors are unlikely to take over the senior football club despite businessman Peter Holmes a Court's bold bid to unite the Rabbitohs.

A joint meeting of the boards last night resolved to form a sub-committee to work through any proposals put to them following Holmes a Court's offer to underwrite the leagues club's debt as an incentive to unite the Juniors with the leagues and football clubs.

While the proposal raised hopes of finally uniting the Rabbitohs to compete financially with other NRL clubs, Richardson predicted the Juniors would again pass on the opportunity to control the football club.

"I don't think the Juniors really want to control Souths," Richardson said today.

"They see their charter as overseeing and running the junior league.

"They also see the importance of Souths surviving in the district and they want to do whatever they can to support that.

"If they wanted to come and take over Souths, George (Piggins) had already offered them the Leagues Club.

"From our point of view, (it's fine) if they wanted to fund it and put the money in, but I don't think they really want to do that, they don't see themselves as having the expertise to run a football club in the NRL.

"What they want to see is the club survive because there is a business plan to ensure that happens long term."

South Sydney Football Club chairman Nicholas Pappas said Holmes a Court's involvement provided the best opportunity to unite the Seniors and Juniors.

"Now the ball is in the court of the Juniors to see if they want to go ahead," Pappas said today.

"They were reluctant in the past to take over from Souths Leagues Club in Redfern, now Peter has lightened their load to absorb some of the debt himself and carry that debt.

"It is encouraging to have people of the calibre of Peter Holmes a Court and Russell Crowe interested in helping Souths come together under one roof.

"That's been my vision for the club for some time and I know others share that vision as well.

"But it's taken Peter as an external catalyst to make it really hit the table and put it on the agenda for consideration.

"Whether they are interested or not is a matter for them, but if they are, and I hope they will be, it's going to be an exciting period."

There were benefits for all parties in going ahead with the proposal, Pappas said.

"It's ultimately a matter for the Leagues Club, but they would look very favourably on a professional organisation like the Juniors, one of the biggest leagues clubs in the country, coming in and taking over the operation of the senior club," he said.

"The other important feature in all of this is it means the Juniors are stepping into Redfern. It means they will have a permanent home, a permanent operation in Redfern, which entrenches the South Sydney brand more strongly in the Redfern district, which is what we've always wanted to do."

Richardson said there was an air of optimism following the latest developments and was confident the club would move forward even if the current proposal was rejected.

"We have never been further down the track than we are now," he said.

"All parties want to secure the future for the long term, not just survive for a year and see what happens after that."