

RL: I won't be pulling the strings: Piggins

By Brent Read

SYDNEY, April 9 AAP - Outgoing South Sydney chairman George Piggins today strongly denied he would be pulling the strings in the National Rugby League club's new-look boardroom.

Piggins smoked the peace pipe with incoming chairman Nick Pappas yesterday, reaching a compromise that saw his existing board maintain a majority in the new nine-man line-up.

Five current board members - handpicked by Piggins - will join forces with Pappas and three members of his ticket, including Ray Martin and Nick Greiner, to guide the Rabbitohs into the future.

That led to accusations Piggins would retain power at the club despite standing down as chairman and handing over the reins to Pappas.

"I will not have any influence on the board," Piggins said on Channel Ten tonight.

"The board are their own people...and they're not yes people for me. They have their own minds."

The compromise agreement ended nearly a week of acrimony between the rival camps ahead of this weekend's Annual General Meeting.

The new line-up will be ratified officially on Sunday as the only candidates after the three independents were convinced to withdraw.

The compromise was welcomed by coaching staff, players and supporters today as life returned to normal at the Redfern club.

The coaching staff were plotting how to beat Wests on Sunday, players were looking forward to taking on the Tigers and supporters were back to discussing who the club should buy next season.

Souths captain Bryan Fletcher admitted the off-field friction was starting to take its toll, with the Rabbitohs yet to win this season.

"It was getting pretty ugly there but in saying that I am pretty disappointed that George has gone," Fletcher said.

"Just reading it in the paper every day, it would have to have some sort of effect on you, albeit the performances we have had the last few weeks, there's no excuses.

"But I think maybe in the back of your minds it has played a part."

Coach Paul Langmack said it was human nature for the players to worry about the off-field turmoil and said it was good that things had been settled.