

SOUTH SYDNEY'S parlous financial state was laid bare again yesterday as chief executive Shane Richardson conceded the club would struggle to pay its bills next season without the support of Souths Juniors.

Richardson aired his concerns at a press conference hosted by prospective owner Peter Holmes a Court and attended by a host of Rabbitohs supporters in the lead-up to Sunday's members' vote on privatisation at Telstra Stadium.

Richardson admitted he fought a weekly battle to ensure the club was stable enough to pay its players' wages and raised concerns over its ability to meet its debts without assistance from the rich Juniors, whose commitment is not guaranteed beyond this season.

His concerns were echoed by the pro-privatisation campaigners in attendance, among them media identity Andrew Denton, former players Mario Fenech and Ian Roberts, and former politician Laurie Brereton.

The thrust of their argument was simple -- embrace privatisation or face a bleak future.

The final decision will be made by the members, with Holmes a Court and partner Russell Crowe requiring 75 per cent support for their \$3 million bid to be accepted.

"I'm a basic sort of guy and I'm not a mechanic, but I know this -- that if I have to keep repairing my engine every month, it's going to wear out," Richardson said.

"This club's engine has been repaired and repaired and repaired. It's time to put a new one in.

"We can go on and continue to just pay the wages on Friday, certainly with the assistance of the Juniors in the next 12 months, but after that I'm not sure we can pay our wages."

Denton used the occasion to warn there would be only two winners should members vote against privatisation -- Sydney Roosters supremo Nick Politis and media tycoon John Singleton.

His theory was based on the premise a no-vote would leave Souths with two choices -- move to the Central Coast or wither and die.

Any move to Gosford would appease Singleton, who is keen to have a side playing out of Central Coast Stadium, of which he is the lessee.

It would also leave the Roosters to cherry-pick Souths' elite juniors.