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Richardson backs Rabbitoh takeover
By STEVE MASCORD

SOUTH Sydney chief executive Shane Richardson has dramatically discarded his impartiality on the takeover bid for the club, imploring members to vote in favour of the proposal.

In the lead-up to last Thursday night's board meeting over the proposal from businessman Peter Holmes a Court and actor Russell Crowe, Richardson declined to give a public opinion on the issue.

"I had to be careful what I said before the meeting because the directors were deciding whether to pass the plan on to members," Richardson said.

"But I certainly made my feelings known inside the board meeting. Members have a clear choice here: we can either go back to the past or we can take the club in a new direction."

Richardson dismissed arguments against the takeover, such as concerns the Rabbitohs would lose their identity, that it's part of a larger business deal and it is "a grab for money".

"Souths have lost \$17 million over the last 10 years -- and \$13 million of that has been made up by the Juniors," he said.

"The juniors are the only ones keeping us alive. We have people here willing to inject capital into a losing business and make it a success while guaranteeing not to change the things about the club that are important.

"There is no real estate involved in this deal."

Richardson insisted things such as the Rabbitohs' colours and home ground would be in more jeopardy without the takeover than with it.

"We could change the jersey and move to Gosford tomorrow without a vote of members -- there's nothing in the constitution to prevent it," he said. "Under Peter Holmes a Court's plan, that can't happen. Those things are enshrined."

Officials are unsure where the vote, involving 4500 members, will take place on March 19.

There is also some confusion about whether another 2500 non-voting members will be invited.