FUEL WATCH

Darwin ULP
Average 136.5
Lowest 135.5
Multiple locations

Darwin Diesel
Average 140.0
Lowest 139.5
Multiple locations

Alice Springs
ULP 128.9
Diesel 139.8

Katherine
ULP 123.3
Diesel 116.4

THE Giles Government has backflipped over the $20 million upgrade to Richardson Park, signalling the project will not go ahead and the money to rugby league will be taken off the table.

“We’ve heard loud and clear that the community in general don’t want that facility to be refurbished,” Chief Minister Adam Giles said yesterday.

“We’ve decided to take the responsible approach and not proceed with the Richardson Park redevelopment. I think this is a win for people in terms of listening.”

The controversial project drew harsh criticism for months over the lack of consultation with the community, that it went against NT Rugby League’s original submission to move to the sports complex at Marrara and that it would rip apart Ludmilla Primary School grounds.

Until yesterday, the Government had pushed through the public outrage. The decision was made to do it, the consultation was what it would look like and how we could improve the amenity in the area,” Mr Giles said. “The community said they don’t want that proceeding, they don’t want that refurbishment to occur so we listened and we made that decision.”

The Government had pushed for the project since a decision by Lands and Planning Minister Dave Toller in April. A Public Accounts Committee report into the deal last month could not ascertain what factors were taken into account before making the cabinet decision.

The plan had already been ticked before consulting with the community, NRLNT and other stakeholders.

Labor yesterday called the move a “win for common sense” and a play for votes in Fogg Lim – Mr Toller’s current electorate.

“Funny that you see Dave Toller being dumped by the (party) and now the Richardson Park project has also been scrapped,” Nicole Manison said. “The Government failed to consult with the community in the first place and it should never have happened that way.”

Ludmilla resident Brad Hopkins, who rallied with other community members against the project, said last evening that he was “cautiously happy” about the decision to scrap the plan.

“We stopped a bad decision but we really need to help them make a good decision,” he said. “They’re listened to us but they’ve now got to look at the holistic problem. We were hoping the rugby league would get a decent house that it needs for future development.”

The Government had fast-tracked the tendering process for the project resulting in four bids as of close on November 18. They were Halikos, Norbuilt, Sitter and TechnoVision Australia.

Mr Giles suggested a new rugby field at the sports complex at Marrara might not be the best option, despite the league calling for it in their original submission.

“It’s not what everybody wants,” he said. “What a lot of people want is a facility, particularly in the city area.”

A public request for proposals will now take place.

Mr Giles also said the $20 million pledged for the upgrade will now be taken off the table. It may be accessed if another option can be found.

He took aim at the NRLNT, saying they had an opportunity for Government assistance but lost it.

“If they hadn’t walked away we may have been able to rehabilitate it while they were still there,” Mr Giles said.

NRLNT general manager John Mitchell said he was still optimistic a new home can be found.

“We’re obviously disappointed, but we’ll continue to work with the Government to get the best outcome for our stakeholders going forward,” he said.

“We absolutely need our own base and a facility that is not antiquated and poorly maintained.”

– additional reporting by Judith Aisthorpe and Grey Morris.