The Northern Territory Badminton Association (NTBA) can save their own sport by accepting one of the many options presented to it by the Northern Territory Government for new playing venues.

Badminton is currently played at Sports House in Fannie Bay however the 30 year old building is in disrepair and has long been earmarked for development, a process that will begin next year.

Minister for Sport, Recreation and Racing Matt Conlan said he hoped Badminton would reconsider the Government’s proposals which will allow its members to continue playing the sport at venues other than Sports House.

“The old Sports House has been earmarked for much needed housing for Territorians for many years,” Mr Conlan said.

“All other tenants of Sports House including the Royal Life Saving Society of the NT, NT touch Football, NT Swimming, Football Federation NT, Darwin Radio Club and NT Triathlon have worked with the Government to find alternative accommodation and we continue to work with Darwin Sub Aqua.

“Since March 2013, the Department of Sport, Recreation and Racing have had seven meetings with Badminton and there have also been two meetings with my own office to assist the organisation with new venue options.

“Many proposals have been presented to Badminton to ensure ongoing competition and social matches within the greater Darwin region can continue when Sports House is vacated on 31 March next year. All have been declined.”

Mr Conlan said the Government would not be accepting Badminton’s only proposal put forward which is to build a $9.6 million joint facility for Badminton, Judo and Table Tennis at Marrara.

“Badminton’s proposal for a new facility to house three sports – badminton, judo and table tennis would be significantly larger than the Marrara Indoor Stadium and the estimated cost (provided by badminton) is $9.6 million for an air-conditioned venue or $6.8 million for a facility without air conditioning,” Mr Conlan said.

“Based on the current membership of these three sports, this means Territory taxpayers would be forking out over $22,000 per member for the higher cost option or $15,000 per member for the lower option.

“Badminton is a fantastic sport enjoyed by Territorians of all ages and I commend the spirit they have shown in recent weeks but unfortunately with just 240 members its numbers simply aren’t enough to warrant this new shared facility when there are enough existing Badminton courts throughout Darwin and Palmerston that can be utilised by its members.
“For Labor’s Ken Vowles to suggest Government accepts this proposal is reckless and financially irresponsible. It’s no wonder the previous Labor Government put the Territory on track to $5.5 billion dollar debt

“A substantial amount of money like $10 million should be spread across the greatest number of Territorians possible and unfortunately in this case it is not.

“Even the Member for Nelson, Gerry Wood said in Parliament tonight that a 6 or $10million facility was not an appropriate use of Government funding.

“If Labor is serious about helping Badminton then they should urge the organisation to agree to one of the Government’s offers which will secure the future of the sport in the Territory.”

The options presented by the Northern Territory Government to Badminton include:

- **Marrara Indoor Sports Stadium**: Six courts available, offered at 50 per cent discount to the standard hiring rate
- **Palmerston Recreation Centre**: Existing anchor points for Badminton and up to eight courts available, already used by Badminton on Tuesday evenings, offer of assistance to free up weeknight time slots, previously used in 2012 to host National under 19 championships
- **Community and School Halls**: Venues around Darwin and Palmerston have been identified as possible alternatives including Nightcliff Middle School which has timeslots available weekday evenings, Dripstone Middle School, which has timeslots available weekday evenings, Sanderson Middle School, which is available Monday, Tuesday and Friday after 6pm as well as Darwin High School and Casuarina Senior College.

In addition, after these low cost options were rejected the government also presented the option:

- **Commercial Lease in Woolner**: A suitable venue was identified which Government has offered to pay 50 per cent of the $165,000 annual rental costs on a five year lease. The proposed lease is inclusive of council rates and other costs including power and water. When Badminton’s share of the cost is spread out amongst its 240 members over the year it equates to under $7 per week for each member.

“The Government has also provided a $20,000 grant to Badminton to assist with their relocation and I look forward to continuing to work with the organisation in good faith to assist them into new venues after 31 March 2014,” Mr Conlan said.

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