With the future of the billion-dollar Arafura Harbour project in the balance, the Country Liberals have formalised their in-principle support for the development.

At the party’s Central Council in Alice Springs on Saturday, delegates endorsed a motion giving in-principle backing to the project pending the appropriate environmental, consultative and regulatory processes.

Opposition Leader Terry Mills said this was in stark contrast to the Henderson Government’s decision to block the proposal.

The Country Liberals’ motion reads:

That this Central Council recognises the visionary nature of the Arafura Harbour development and endorses the process of appropriate planning, public consultation, environmental assessment and collaboration with Land Owners.

Mr Mills said the motion promotes the need for proper scrutiny – including an independent environmental assessment and full public consultation.

“Home-grown, billion dollar developments like Arafura Harbour don’t come along every day, and it’s important that they’re given every opportunity to succeed,” Mr Mills said.

“While we acknowledge that the processes involved in making Arafura Harbour a reality are still in their infancy, the Country Liberals are making a clear statement that as the alternative Government we will do all we can to assist the developers engage with key stakeholders – including the Darwin community.”

Mr Mills said he was concerned the Henderson Government had refused access to Government land within weeks of details of the project being made public.
“It sends out a terrible signal to business that this Government will turn its back on developers without all the facts being placed on the table,” he said.

Party President Rick Setter said the Country Liberals have been responsible for the key Territory building projects including the Alice Springs to Darwin railway, East Arm Port, Yulara and Cullen Bay.

“Today’s motion continues the Country Liberals’ decades’ long tradition of providing pathways for sustainable, visionary developments that create jobs, boost the economy and enhance the Territory’s lifestyle,” Mr Setter said.

“The Country Liberals believe the Territory’s continued growth is best maintained by working with all stake-holders and not capitulating at the first hurdle.

“In a time of significant economic challenges, the Henderson Government has failed to consider that Arafura Harbour could create thousands of jobs and increase housing stocks.”

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