

\$1m kiosk no one used

Demolition ends 12-year row

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A \$1.3 million building in Sydney's Garigal National Park is set to be demolished without ever opening to the public.

After more than 12 years of bureaucratic bungling and legal brawls the building — originally intended as a kiosk, tea room and information centre — has been earmarked for demolition because it would be too expensive to fix.

The site has been the subject of repeated policy backflips by successive State governments since the 1980s.

On the northern shore of Middle Harbour next to the Roseville Bridge, the building was approved for construction by the Unsworth government in 1987, when Premier Bob Carr was environment minister.

When construction finally began in 1992, residents were outraged because they had not been notified.

The Land and Environment Court declared the building was

illegal and ruled it should be demolished, even though construction was nearing completion.

The Greiner government then ordered a fresh environmental assessment in 1993 which failed to resolve the issue, so a third assessment was ordered and in 1994 the building given the go-ahead with some alterations.

But the Carr Government hit a fresh snag in 1997 when then environment minister Pam Allan identified problems with the compensation package for the construction firm, Davitts, for revenue lost through the delays.

Last November, in one of her final acts as environment minister, Ms Allan decided the building should be demolished after all.

A spokeswoman for Environment Minister Bob Debus said a final decision had not yet been made, but it would be much cheaper to demolish the building than refurbish it to an acceptable standard.

"To modify it would cost around \$1 million but demolition is only \$20,000 to \$30,000," the spokeswoman said.

She said the Government could not justify the refurbishment and modification costs when funds were needed for other national parks.

Liberal MP Andrew Humpherson, whose electorate of Davidson includes Garigal National Park, described the decision as "a disgrace".

"They kept it secret before the recent State election," Mr Humpherson, who chairs the Opposition waste watch committee, told *The Daily Telegraph*.

"Only now has it come to light. It's unbelievable that the Carr Government would allow more than \$1 million in taxpayer investment to be demolished."

The total cost of the building was around \$700,000, and the compensation to Davitts was \$653,000.

Mr Humpherson said the vast majority of residents wanted the building to open.

"It has remained fenced-off for seven years with the National Parks Service hoping that vandalism and dilapidation will give them the justification for demolition," he said.