The Territory's proposed university.

THE Bill which will give the Territory a university has been introduced to the Legislative Assembly, but the future of the community is worried about the type of institution that could spring up in the north.

Professor Bill Walker, commissioned by the Northern Government to recommend on the establishment and governance of a Territory University, said the so-called Alaska model would be best suited here.

But Darwin Community College staff fear that planning vice-chancellor and former Department of Education Secretary, Dr Jim Edele, wants to see the Alaska model "set aside" in favour of a DCC-type model.

Dr Edele is reported to have said: "the Alaska model leaves me the creeps" at a DCC meeting.

Although the full text of Professor Walker's report has not been made public, it is understood it calls for a state-wide system encompassing a number of distinct centres dealing with one or more levels of post-secondary education.

Any of these centres could offer degree programs, but would not have in to be part of the state-wide university system.

LEVELS

The suggested university would have two levels -- normal undergraduate degree courses and Technical and Further Education (TAFE).

Courses would be offered by the DCC at the College of Advanced Education (CAE) level, and on degree programs directed toward degree standards.

The Alaska-type system headed by a senate and chancellor, would initially involve three campuses -- the university college of the NT (created out of the CAE of the DCC) and the DCC's CAE sector and the Community College of Region of Central Australia, which would offer some elements of normal degree courses and TAFE.

The institution would have its own council and chief executive officer.

A report is believed to place great emphasis on the role of vice-chancellor, who would provide academic leadership, administrative capability and personal and social skills -- and have several years university experience.

College Staff Association President, Mr Peter Nitchie, wants to see the philosophy and operating practices behind the unique institution continued within a university.

However, the association is worried this might not happen.

Although the Walker Report has been seen by the Chief Minister Mr Ewingham and Education Minister, Mr Robertson, no staff association member has seen it and they fear the recommendations have been "put aside".

Mr Nitchie said there was already talk of the university being built at Palmerston, about 30km from Darwin.

Such a decision could spell disaster, because if the buildings were to be constructed as part of an Alaska model, they should be closer to the DCC's Casuarina campus.

The DCC relies heavily on universities providing tertiary education anyway any university would draw only a small fraction of the community.

The higher body of the university initial staffing should be a precaution to make a 60km trek two or three times a week would "creep the institution at the time it was most vulnerable.

They appear to be wedded to the notion of a public monument right down the track," Mr Nitchie said.

Mr Nitchie sees the likelihood of the large numbers of people, who are currently educated in southerns states, changing their present ways and attending tertiary education in the north.

The potential for a "disaster exists," he said.

The spectre of an autonomy threat was raised early this month when Mr Ewingham ordered a review of the college.

The recently completed review looked at the possibility of transferring the college's administrative clerical support staff.

The possibility of incorporating DCC policy planning section, in particular the technical and further education area, and the building program unit into the body of the Education Department was also studied.

The board of review was conducted by the Public Service Commission officer and did not include a DCC representative.

FEARS

Mr Nitchie said there are fears the review may be a taste of things to come at the university.

"If it's not prevented automatically it's not credible," Nitchie said.

It was against this background that the Minister and the planning vice-chancellor spoke out last week.

Neither would commit themselves as to the likely matters.

Things are going to work smoothly, "Dr Edele said.

Dr Edele did say that Territorial planning be considered as that not and a college of any other institution.

"Therefore it seems to me at this stage of our planning what we have to do is develop an approach that will result in an institution that has particular relevance to the Northern Territory, but which will stand as a broad component of the national system of higher education," Mr Edele said.

"When we looked initially at the Alaska model the intention was to try to find a model which would enable an efficient and reasonably economic form of higher education to be made available on the Northern Territories.

"It's of course, impossible to transfer anybody else's system.

"I believe that it's essential we have the best possible co-ordination of our higher education in the Territory with whatever we dubs the Alaska model or whether we... it would certainly be a modified Alaska.

But the staff association's dream of an open entry institution does not look like coming to fruition.

"Well nothing has yet been heard of the courses, but what is true in Australia is that no university offers full-time courses, some offer part-time," he said.

Dr Edele does not feel full-time students will be a problem.

He also seems confident that the essential 1 quality post graduate students can be attracted to the Territory by the right courses and staff.

The Minister Mr Robertson seems equally confident about the future of a Territory university, although the size of the university file on his desk indicates his own involvement has not been that great so far.

They appear to believe there could be a problem for the acceptance of the Alaska model by academics of Australia.

QUALITY

Regardless of the model chosen the Minister also believes high quality people will be attracted to a Territory university.

Mr Robertson said the review of the college was aimed at maintaining its autonomy of a precursor to what would happen in the future.

The review was simply aimed at giving the young NT Government aimed at ensuring tax-payers money was not being wasted.

Even if the review does not attract the college university will, and staff and students have executed the said that, Mr Robertson said.