Higher Education

Top End adopts reform plan

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NORTHERN Territory University will fundamentally reform itself to become financially viable.

It will pare back subjects and courses and build up areas of strength in teaching and research.

The university council last week gave the green light to a plan to implement most of the 49 recommendations of a $350,000 KPMG report, which was funded by territory and commonwealth governments.

Among them are consolidating programs, increasing overseas fee-paying student numbers, overhauling the university council and creating more partnerships with other institutions.

The report identifies seven areas of potential competitive advantage: indigenous heritage and population; desert terrain; remoteness; proximity to South-East Asia; tropical environments access to developments in the oil and gas industry; and strategic defence position.

The KPMG report said resources for the university and stakeholder perceptions lie at the heart of the project.

"The NTU faced a serious financial situation at the end of 1999," it says. "While the financial results for the year 2000 appeared to show some improvement, the university's ongoing financial viability is problematic without longer-term reform."

Stakeholders were "passionately committed" to the university. But they also said the NTU would not succeed if it kept responding to all needs for education and training in the territory.

The report recommends continuing with humanities, social studies, education, science, computing and information technology, visual and performing arts, engineering, health sciences, business and law, built environment and agriculture.

Vice-chancellor Ron McKay told the HES the strongest student demand was in nursing, education and information technology.

He did not anticipate any staff redundancies.

Optimistic: Professor McKay anticipates no jobs will go

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