University evolves to survive

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THE national review of higher education will ensure a sustainable future for all Australian universities, Education Minister Brendan Nelson promised yesterday.

Dr Nelson was announcing a new name for the troubled Northern Territory University, which is to be amalgamated with the Centralian College and become Charles Darwin University.

It will also form a “close association” with the Menzies School of Health Research, and set up an institute of advanced studies to push its research capacity.

The mergers and renaming were predicted in December, when Dr Nelson said that the commonwealth had committed $3 million towards the changes.

The territory Government will also chip in an extra $1.5 million a year to help set up the Institute of Advanced Studies. The money is on top of $5 million it gives the university each year.

Chief Minister Clare Martin said legislation establishing the Charles Darwin University would go before the territory parliament by mid-year.

“While the territory’s small population presents a real challenge to any tertiary institution, it is crucial that we make this investment in our young people so they have the option to undertake their tertiary studies or training right here, rather than interstate,” she said in a statement.

Dr Nelson said yesterday that his review was being considered only “in the context of the May budget”. But vice-chancellor Ken McKinnon hinted there would be more money for the university from the budget.

Professor McKinnon has introduced staff and subject cuts to streamline the ailing university since he stepped in as interim vice-chancellor last year, after former vice-chancellor Ron McKay left because of ill-health.

He decided in November to sacrifice 42 administrative jobs to refocus the university on frontline teaching.