THE NORTHERN TERRITORY JOBS PLAN

Productivity, Participation, Population
# Table of Contents

Introduction 4

Jobs Plan Chapters 6

Executive Summary of Commitments 7

The Values and Principles of a Labor Government in Growing the Territory Economy 11

Labor’s Economic Framework 19

Growing Jobs by Improving Business Productivity 21

Growing Jobs by Improving Participation 28

Growing Jobs by Attracting More People to the Territory 34
Introduction

The Northern Territory is a young and growing economy with a bright future. We’ve come a long way since self Government but there is more to be done.

Over the last decade the Territory has experienced solid economic growth with strong employment generation. The Martin and Henderson Labor Governments grew and developed the economy. They oversaw the completion of the railway line from Adelaide and the completion of the Darwin LNG. They went after and got the Inpex project and they built the Waterfront. These Labor Governments, working with the Australian Government, delivered a significant housing infrastructure program and schools upgrade right through the bush.

Most importantly the Labor Governments provided certainty to business, they talked with business and unions; they had a level playing field and were accessible. They understood that small to medium businesses are the engine room of jobs and they did not forget them in their economic plans for the Territory.

Labor has shown that it is capable of leading strong economic growth and will do so again into the future. But equally importantly Labor has shown that it provides strong, stable Government with clear policy directions, consistent decision making and open access to Ministers.

There is good reason to be very positive about the future of the Northern Territory.

But there are also reasons for concern.

The ongoing instability in Government, the inconsistent application of policy combined with a lack of transparency and openness has led to a loss of trust in Government. This is impacting on business investment and business confidence.

The construction industry is one of our most significant generators of jobs. This industry has been slowing across the Territory. It is soon entering a post Inpex construction phase and a significant loss of jobs will be experienced. The reduction of operations by Rio Tinto in Nhulunbuy and the drop in commodity prices for minerals has all added to growing levels of concern about the future of employment in the Territory.

Most worrying is the information that the Territory’s population growth rate has slowed and in 2014 we lost 3329 more people than we gained through interstate
migration.

Labor believes the lack of focus by the Government in addressing these issues and planning against them is already having an impact on the future growth of the Territory and the jobs that we need. A lack of jobs means more people will leave. A bad cycle sets in.

At these times the Government, business and industry and the community need to pull together behind a comprehensive plan aimed at growing the economy and, in particular, growing jobs. This planning has been missing for three years.

This discussion paper begins Labor’s development of a new *Northern Territory Jobs Plan*.

It seeks your input and your feedback.

We welcome your comments and ideas.

MICHAEL GUNNER
Labor Leader
Jobs Plan Chapters

This position paper will be broken into the following chapters:

- Executive Summary of Commitments.
- Chapter One- The Values and Principles of a Labor Government.
- Chapter Three- Growing Jobs by Improving the Productivity of Business.
- Chapter Four- Growing Jobs by Increasing Participation in the Economy.
- Chapter Five - Growing Jobs by Attracting More People to the Territory.
- Keeping It Local.*
- Promoting the Enablers of Economic Growth-
  - Infrastructure*
  - Innovation and Science*
- Growing Jobs in Specific Economic Sectors.*
  - Trade and Asian Relationships.*
  - Indigenous Economic Development.*
  - Tourism.*
  - Agribusiness.*
  - Regional Economic Growth.*
- Work Health and Safety.*
- Skills in School.*
- Skilling Territorians.*
- Remote Housing Strategy.*

* These areas will form separate papers complementary to the Northern Territory Jobs Plan. Some of these have been released and others will be released over coming months.
Executive Summary of Commitments

The Economic Framework

1. The economic sectors that will be Labor’s focus in our first term will be:
   - Agribusiness
   - Gas and minerals
   - Tourism
   - Defence related industries, and
   - International education.

Labor believes that it is also important that Government works with the following emerging employment and economic areas:

   - Health especially tropical health initiatives and delivering health services through technology. Indigenous pharmacopeia will also play an important role
   - Territory Art, Culture, Food and Fashion
   - Land management practices in the desert and in the tropics
   - Next stage Solar and Alternative Energy.

2. Labor will retain the Developing the North structure.

3. On coming to office Labor will host a Territory Economic Summit to finalise a plan that will guide investment.

4. Labor will re-introduce Business Roundtables as a means of engaging local business input.

5. We will rebuild Team NT to promote the Territory nationally and internationally.
Growing Jobs by Improving Productivity

Labor will:

6. Build an Independent Research and Economic Data Unit that will provide to and share data with the business community.

7. Restructure the Department of Business to create an agency of Business, Innovation and Trade.

8. Promote and support small business. We will:
   - Establish a Small Business Champions Unit (SBCU.) to advocate for small business from within Government
   - Expand the number and type of small business training and professional development programs available to owners and their staff
   - Organise seminars aimed at sharing innovations and practices that can assist small business to be more efficient and productive
   - Ensure the infrastructure spend by Government includes high levels of repairs and maintenance and minor capital work in contract sizes that allow small to medium business to get their share
   - Work with small business to develop the data and research they need to actively support their business choices and activities. Once established by Labor the Independent Research and Economic Data Unit will work with the SBCU to provide the data and research required by small business
   - Offer small business consultation and consistency. There will be consistency in decision making, Government structures and policy action. There will be consultation on ways forward to promote small business.

9. Provide updated Business Productivity Growth Programs. Labor also wants the views of business on whether these programs should be funded through and delivered through peak bodies such as the Chamber of Commerce NT, Master Builders Association, Housing Industry Association and others.

10. Improve Coordination of Government Programs:

   **Coordinate the information of Government**
   coordinate all economic research and information materials, Territory investment opportunities and programs that can assist business; and

   **Coordinate the Territory’s labour market**

   To achieve this Labor will

   - Conduct annual forums with industry, employers and unions to develop a Skilled Occupation Priority List used in attracting skilled labour to the Territory
• Connect industry sectors with potential workers from Territory workforce attraction campaigns and promote the Territory Worker Database as a way of connecting employers with potential workers
• Expand employment profiles in communities to provide information about jobs, training levels and current businesses
• Provided information on investment opportunities in the Territory.

Growing Jobs by Improving Participation

11. Invest in training and re-skilling Territorians. (The detail will be contained in a separate paper.)

12. Invest in Indigenous Employment Pathways

Labor supports the contracting policies announced by the Northern Territory Government.

Additionally Labor proposes to:

• Work with Indigenous communities and their representative organisations to ensure that the Government and Indigenous people living in communities engage in economic development and growth in the manner and at the pace they wish to proceed
• Bring together industry, the business community, Indigenous representative groups and Indigenous communities to plan for growth, jobs and development
• Ensure that Indigenous communities receive strong infrastructure spending programs, particularly focussed on providing housing, to ensure opportunities for work will be created in these communities
• Ensure that funding, particularly infrastructure funding, is devolved where possible to Regional Councils and regional authorities to promote local employment
• Work with communities and employers to recognise broader concepts of employment and more flexible working arrangements.

Labor will set Indigenous employment targets in key Government fields.

• Endorse the current Indigenous Employment Strategy
• Make a strong push to train Indigenous people in the delivery of key Government services. This will be particularly focused on remote and regional towns and communities where a churning workforce provides challenges to service delivery
• Aim to have 500 more Indigenous people filling a role as a teacher, police officer or nurse by 2026. (Base year 2016.)
To advance skills development Labor will:

- work with Indigenous Territorians and industry to target training for trades
- Reposition the existing Indigenous Responsive training program and the Indigenous Workforce Participation Initiatives Program to better align the two for job outcomes in regions and to leverage Australian Government initiatives
- Introduce a specific Indigenous pre-employment/apprenticeship program to provide specific training for unskilled or semi-skilled Indigenous Territorians to gain essential industry skills that lead jobs. This will be linked where possible to Australian Government programs
- Fund Foundation skills for Indigenous workers who require increased literacy and numeracy in the workplace to advance in their careers; and
- Introduce a strong skills and careers focussed program into schools across the Territory. This will be outlined in more detail in the Skills At School paper to be released in the near future
- Labor will establish an advisory group made up of Indigenous people in leadership roles, industry, business, Indigenous organisations and the public sector whose task it will be to develop a pool of young Indigenous people to take on leadership roles across our whole community
- Through cooperation with the Desert Knowledge Centre in Alice Springs Labor will introduce a focussed Indigenous innovation project.

Growing Jobs by Attracting More People to the Territory

Labor will:

13. Undertake research into what keeps people here and what places pressure on them to go elsewhere.

14. Prepare a package that will reduce the pressure on cost of living across the Territory.

15. Provide more aged care housing options.

16. Expand education options

17. Expand and support the arts, culture, sports and lifestyle of Territorians.

18. Ensure Government grasps innovation and is agile and open to ideas.
Chapter One

The Values and Principles of a Labor Government in Growing the Territory Economy
In growing the Territory economy a Labor Government will:

1. Act in the interests of all Territorians.
2. Provide certainty to business, industry and the community.
3. Be open and transparent.
4. Consult and ensure Ministers will be accessible.
5. Support the participation and involvement in the economy of all groups within it such as large business, small to medium business, industry representative groups, unions and worker representatives.
6. Encourage and support greater involvement in the economy by Indigenous Territorians and representative groups.
7. Provide sustainable growth with world leading environmental protection in place.
8. Protect our lifestyle for future generations.
9. Ensure that Territorians work in a safe workplace.

**Acting in the Interest of All Territorians**

It is a fundamental requirement of Government that it acts in the interests of all residents.

Growing the economy is in the interests of all Territorians and therefore must include all Territorians. Economic growth is the key to providing a better future for all. It is a provider of jobs and opportunities for Territorians.

The Government must unleash the creative forces of the private and public sector to ensure that the Territory is a dynamic, innovative and creative place that is exciting to live.

Governments must engage with Territorian no matter where they live—whether it is the regional towns, the remote towns, communities and outstations / homelands, pastoral properties, rural blocks or the major metropolitan area of Darwin and Palmerston.

Territorians need to be encouraged and supported to play the part they want to play in the growth of our economy.
Certainty to business, industry and the community

Certainty is a fundamental requirement for business confidence.

The CLP Government has undermined certainty and business confidence through its ongoing division and infighting, by inconsistent application of policy and through its endless practice of policy by thought bubble.

Labor does not believe in 180 degree changes. Policy will not be changed simply because it has been the creation of another Government.

Labor will end the inconsistency in Government policy.

Specific Commitment

Labor will retain the *Developing the North* structure and policy framework. We believe this framework and the established Federal Government framework needs time to grow and mature and work properly.

However, Labor will ensure a greater engagement with Indigenous Territorians in this program, which is currently under supported and a major flaw in the Developing the North framework. We will ensure that local business and industry are not excluded from decision making.
Open and transparent Government

Confidence in the integrity of public officials and Government processes is essential if we are to meet the considerable challenges that we face and to grasp the opportunities that we share.

Not only is open Government the right thing to do, it’s the smart thing to do.

Open Government and the trust that it builds is the bedrock for the partnerships and collaboration we need as a community to improve the lives of all Territorians and build our economy.

It is the way we take advantage of modern technology and find new ways of connecting, engaging and organising Government.

The community must have confidence that all Territorians are treated without fear or favour by Government, and that the resources of Government are always employed in the public interest.

Specific Commitment

Labor has produced a policy discussion paper titled *Restoring Integrity and Trust to Government*. This paper contains specific commitments to this goal.

A Government that will Consult and Ministers that will be Accessible

Labor believes that the Government is at its best when it is consulting with Territorians and acting on the information and knowledge gained.

In Government, Labor will consult widely on a broad range of issues and Ministers will be engaged with the community.

All Territorians have an important stake in the growing of the Territory economy. Labor will engage with Territorians generally and especially with representatives of business and industry, unions, Indigenous organisations, environmental groups and the non-Government sector.
Specific Commitment

The Territory Economic Summit

Labor believes a plan for our economy is critical. This is why Labor has created the Northern Territory Jobs Plan. To ensure this plan is created in cooperation with and with the support of the community Labor will as early as possible after the formation of Government bring together a summit of Territory business, industry groups, indigenous representative groups, the non-Government sector, unions and the public sector to provide immediate input into Government on ways forward.

Under the auspices of the Northern Territory Jobs Plan framework, the summit will be focussed on -

- Creating jobs in the economy
- The right place to invest in infrastructure spending
- Stemming the population outflow
- Innovation in the Territory economy
- Regional growth
- Indigenous economic engagement.

The aim of the summit will be to look at immediate actions that could be undertaken by Government to address issues facing the Territory.

1. Re-introduce Business Roundtables

Labor believes that Government needs to organise a mechanism for regular updated advice and input from business.

Our experience in Government shows that regular business roundtables is a sensible and sound way to organise such input.

Labor will re-introduce Business Roundtable discussions and will hold these across the Territory. These roundtables will feature various industries and various business sizes, ensuring that small business get heard.

2. Rebuilding Team NT

Labor is determined to promote the Territory to Australia and the world. To achieve this Labor will rebuild TeamNT a group made up of Government, industry, business and unions. TeamNT will travel nationally and internationally seeking to promote the Territory, attract business investment and attract people.

Selling the Territory nationally and internationally is important and is not solely the responsibility of Ministers and the Chief Minister. This should be shared with stakeholders in the economic field.

It will be co-chaired by prominent Territorians who will be remunerated for their work. They will be provided with secretariat support. The chairs will work with Government and the private sector to establish opportunities for appropriate delegations to promote the Territory on key issues.

Team NT will also assist the Government in determining its business travel schedule.
Support the participation and involvement in the economy of all groups within it such as large business, small to medium business, industry representative groups, unions and worker representatives

Labor believes that it is important for all players in the Territory economy to be treated fairly and with respect. Labor supports the role of industry representative groups and will continue to financially support the operations of those organisations.

Labor also supports the work of unions in the Territory. The representation of workers is an important right and part of the overall balance of our economy. Labor will continue to work with the unions in Government to ensure the ongoing growth of the economy.

Encourage and support greater involvement in the economy by Indigenous Territorians and representative groups

Indigenous Territorians represent 30% of the Territory's population and a much higher proportion of the population of remote towns, communities and outstations / homelands. In the remote Territory Indigenous people form a large part of regional and local economies as employers, employees, and consumers.

Indigenous people in remote communities own land and resources and this forms the basis of an opportunity for growing the engagement by Indigenous people in the Territory economy.

Additionally, Indigenous people are clearly the best people to provide ongoing health, education, police and other services in communities as they provide a stable workforce.

There are significant barriers to the full engagement of many Indigenous Territorians in the economy and in the labour force. It is Labor’s intention to tackle these barriers.

Labor will do this in consultation with Indigenous people, representative groups and organisations and will seek to coordinate efforts with the Australian Government to ensure, where possible, that duplication of effort is minimised.

Specific Commitment

Labor will provide a specific paper detailing our proposed engagement with Indigenous Territorians, the devolution of powers to remote communities, employment, health, education and key matters. In addition this Northern Territory Jobs Plan contains specific commitments to training indigenous Territorians detailed later. Labor has also released a Remote Housing Strategy discussion paper which focuses on the chronic shortage of housing in remote communities.
Sustainable growth with world leading environmental protection in place

The Territory environment is a matter of pride for all Territorians. Labor understands the importance of the Territory environment. We believe it is critical for the future of the Territory that our environment is protected and supported.

Labor does not believe that the environment and economic growth are exclusive of each other. We will ensure that the mechanisms for environmental protection are in place and properly resourced.

Specific commitment

Labor will be presenting a separate policy position paper on protecting our environment.

Protection of our lifestyle for future generations

The Territory lifestyle is what keeps us here and attracts many from overseas and interstate. It is a major factor in our growth.

In Government, Labor will work with the community to ensure that this lifestyle is not only supported but enhanced and improved.

Specific Commitment

Separate to this document Labor will release a significant policy program in support of the Territory lifestyle.
Ensure that Territorians work in a safe workplace

Labor is committed to protecting the safety of Territory workers. It is unacceptable for workers to be employed in premises that do not meet Australian standards or undertake their daily work in a way that could be injurious to them.

Labor will work with unions and industry to ensure the highest work health and safety standards are applied.

Specific commitment

Labor will provide a separate paper on Work Health and Safety.
Chapter Two

Labor’s Economic Framework
Labor’s Focus in our First term

Through this *Northern Territory Jobs Plan*, Labor will take to the proposed economic summit a draft framework for our economic future. This framework will be subject to debate, discussion and redrafting by the Summit.

Once agreed this framework will form the basis of Government actions throughout the first term and will be regularly monitored and reported against during that time.

Labor believes this framework will have two foci.

The first will be the key major programs underpinning Labor’s *Developing the North* plan. These areas are the proven elements of our Territory’s economy.

The second will be new, innovative and less certain areas which will require support and planning from Government in going forward.

Labor believes that the major economic areas for jobs and economic growth are:

- Agribusiness
- Gas and minerals
- Tourism
- Defence related industries, and
- International education.

Labor believes that it is also important that Government works with the following emerging employment and economic areas:

- Health especially tropical health initiatives and delivering health services through technology. Indigenous pharmacopeia will also play an important role
- Territory Art, Culture, Food and Fashion
- Land management practices in the desert and in the tropics
- Next stage Solar and Alternative Energy.

These industries will require significant Government support and encouragement.

Each of these industries—both the established industries and the emerging ones—require efficient and effective enablers. These include:

- Consistent Government policy action and environment
- Sensible and focussed infrastructure expenditure
- Sound open Government policies to ensure information, data and research is focussed and available
- A commitment to innovation in Government and the promotion of innovation across industry
- Good transport and supply chain links that can allow continuity of supply
- Skilled labour
- A growing population.

In this *Northern Territory Jobs Plan* Labor will provide policy plans and proposed actions that will demonstrate support for and development of all of these industries and enablers.
Chapter Three
Growing Jobs by Improving Business Productivity
Increasing productivity is a major goal of all businesses. Increased productivity leads to increases in financial returns. Productivity can be increased through improvements in the workforce, workplace management practices or through innovation and the use of technology.

It can also be improved by sound information that allows forward planning.

Territory Labor believes that supporting employers to increase their productivity will assist in growing the economy and in turn lead to more jobs. It will improve business confidence and business confidence drives strong investment and growth.

A commitment to supporting the capacity building of local industry, open and transparent Government planning, consistent policy, reducing red tape and improved coordination between agencies and jurisdictions makes for an improved climate for business.

Under the Northern Territory Jobs Plans Territory Labor will implement initiatives that can assist employers to increase their productivity.

Improving Productivity and Job Creation by Giving Local Business a Fair Go

Labor believes that at this stage of our economic development the Government must actively support local industry.

We acknowledge that there are national and international rules that govern this particular policy area however, Labor believes it is important to focus Government on what can be done to develop local business.

Specific Commitment

Labor will:

- Target the Government’s procurement spending to more aggressively support local business
- Increase the emphasis on supporting local business within the procurement principles and ensure lead contractors use their nominated subcontractors
- Introduce an independent board to oversight the application of local content.
- Issue tenders in a way that maximises the ability of smaller local businesses to win contracts
- Pre-tender communication with local business
- Strongly support the work of ICNNT
- Joint future planning between Government and Business
- Assisting business to joint venture for larger opportunities
- Long term infrastructure plans
- A Buy Local Campaign.

A detailed separate paper on Supporting Local Business is attached.
Improving Productivity and Job Creation through Access to Data and Research

Labor believes that access to data, information and research will allow business to grow and be more productive. This is frequently too expensive and complex to source for smaller businesses. Labor believes the Government has an important role to play in assisting business with this information.

Specific Commitment

Building an Independent Research and Economic Data Unit

In Government Labor developed a unit called the Territory Growth Planning Unit. This unit looked at the economic and social data of the Territory and worked with Government and the community to predict future trends, needs etc.

The CLP disbanded this unit on taking office.

Labor believes this was a mistake and will bring back into place a unit focussed on providing advice to Government and the private sector with advice on future growth through real data on the Territory economy.

Options for this Unit:

Option One- Bring Back the Territory Growth Planning Unit and base it in the Department of Chief Minister.

Option Two- an independent Territory statistician’s office that researches and hosts information accessible by business and Government.

Option Three- Establish a research and data centre within the Charles Darwin University to focus on growth and development of the Territory.
Improving Productivity and Job Creation through Innovation

Labor believes that we are in the midst of the second great industrial revolution and this revolution is being driven by the internet and computerisation. This Jobs Plan is focussed on immediately lifting the number of jobs in the Territory but we must also look beyond the next five years and establish a place for ourselves in the world of smart technology and innovation.

The Territory cannot be left behind as technological innovation is now at the core of business growth and success.

Labor will work with business, the public sector and the university to lift innovation in Territory business.

Specific Commitment

Labor has developed a separate paper on innovation and science to support this plan. This is attached.
Improving Productivity and Job Creation through Championing Small Business

Labor believes that small to medium businesses in the Territory are the engine room of jobs creation. To ensure that this important part of our economy is growing and healthy Labor will invest in supporting small business.

**Specific Commitment**

1. Labor will restructure the Department of Business to create an agency of Business, Innovation and Trade.

2. Within this restructured Department there will be a Small Business Champions Unit (SBCU.) This unit will be focussed on raising the profile of small to medium businesses across all Government agencies and to the Government. The aim of this unit will be to advocate for, promote, support and help grow small business across the Territory from within Government.

3. Through the SBCU and in combination with business representative groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, Labor will expand the number and type of small business training and professional development programs available to small business owners and their staff.

4. Through Labor’s innovation plans the SBCU will organise seminars aimed at sharing innovations and practices that can assist small business to be more efficient and productive.

5. Labor will ensure the infrastructure spend by Government includes strong levels of repairs and maintenance, minor capital work expenses in contract sizes that allow small to medium business to get their share.

6. Labor will work with small business to develop the data and research they need to actively support their business choices and activities. Once established by Labor the Independent Research and Economic Data Unit will work with the SBCU to provide the data and research required by small business.

7. Labor will offer small business consultation and consistency. There will be consistency in decision making, Government structures and policy action. There will be consultation on ways forward to promote small business.
Provide Updated Business Productivity Growth Programs

For more than a decade the Government has run business productivity and support programs. These are strongly supported by Labor and they will continue.

However, it is now timely to work with business to see if these programs are the right ones, what else is needed and who should be responsible for the delivery and coordination of this program.

Programs should support potential employers to start a business or existing employers to improve skills, boost productivity or increase growth in their businesses.

There is also increasingly a need for programs that foster innovation in business.

Our review of these programs will be done with business and will go beyond information by survey. We will talk with business about what they want.

Labor also wants the views of business on whether this program should be funded through and delivered through peak bodies such as the Chamber of Commerce NT, Master Builders Association, Housing Industry Association and others.

Improved Productivity by the Coordination of Government Programs

Nothing reduces productivity more than being confronted by a bewildering array of programs often offering the same or similar products or services and having application or acquittal requirements with significant red tape.

Coordinating NT Government programs and leveraging Australian Government initiatives to present clear and coordinated programs will be an immediate action of a Territory Labor Government.

Labor sees two immediate opportunities where better coordination can support industry, local businesses and potential investors in the Territory. They are outlined below.
### Specific Commitment

1. **Coordinate the information of Government**

Through the new Department of Business, Innovation and Trade a Labor Government will coordinate all economic research and information materials, Territory investment opportunities and programs that can assist business.

Staff will support Territorians seeking to establish businesses and those seeking to improve their business by providing a service directory point for their questions. Staff will case manage enquiries and assist business people through the process they are seeking to undertake.

Labor will take the opportunity to use the framework provided by the *Northern Territory Jobs Plan and Developing the North* to bring Australian Government information, programs and initiatives together with this Territory services initiative will help further reduce the frustration of business.

2. **Coordinate the Territory’s labour market**

The shifting supply of labour is an issue for business and employers.

Labor understands that Government has a role in coordinating workforce development research, labour market information and employment / training programs to assist businesses and employers to get workers and Territorians to get jobs.

We want Territorians to be trained and have the best opportunity at finding jobs. We need to increase the participation of Territorians in work and we need to keep Territorians here by keeping them in work.

We also recognise that occupational shortages exist and that skilled workers may need to be sourced from interstate and overseas.

Labor believes that a stronger engagement with employers, unions and workers will support the development of better coordinated workforce information in the Territory, ensuring Territorians get the jobs first.

To achieve this Labor will

- Conduct annual forums with industry, employers and unions to develop a Skilled Occupation Priority List used in attracting skilled labour to the Territory
- Connect industry sectors with potential workers from Territory workforce attraction campaigns and promote the Territory Worker Database as a way of connecting employers with potential workers
- Expand employment profiles in communities to provide information about jobs, training levels and current businesses
- Provided information on investment opportunities in the Territory
Labor believes that all Territorians should have the opportunity to participate in the economy and to have a job. To ensure people get this opportunity Labor will invest heavily in training and educating Territorians.

Training is the key to skills development and improving skill levels is crucial to increasing Territorians participation in the work force. It is also crucial in expanding our economic growth by having a pool of trained workers able to help and expand and grow business. A skilled labour force is a key enabler to economic growth.

Skilling Territorians

Participation in vocational education and training or higher education to achieve qualifications or skill sets increases a person’s opportunity to get a job and earn more.

Participation rates for Territorians in the labour force have consistently been high for over a decade. However Indigenous participation in the labour force is still underrepresented. Labor will address this issue.

Specific Commitment

Labor has produced two specific papers on training Territorians. They are Skills at School and Skilling Territorians. They will be released separately to this paper.

Creating Jobs by Investing in Indigenous Employment Pathways

Labor believes in developing the skills and employment opportunities of all Territorians.

A Labor Government will work closely with Indigenous Territorians, regional authorities and shires and representative organisations to skill Indigenous Territorians and provide employment opportunities right across the Territory.

We will work to ensure there are employment opportunities for Indigenous people in the bush, regional centres and major urban areas.

Many Indigenous Territorians currently do access a range of training programs and are successful in finding a job. Despite this Indigenous people are underrepresented in the workforce.
The Australian Government currently fund a number of programs to help unemployed Indigenous Territorians to gain employment. More coordination between this work and Territory programs must happen.

Skills and Jobs in Communities and Regional Centres

Labor will support the growth of a strong labour market in communities and regional centres. Labor supports the contracting policies announced by the Northern Territory Government.

This includes:

- Requiring each contractor to achieve 30% local Indigenous employment for all Government infrastructure contracts above $500,000. As this has now been in for 12 months Labor will review its impact and effectiveness.
- A new remote contracting policy aimed at ensuring 70% of small contracts for construction, repairs and maintenance in remote Indigenous communities go to local Indigenous businesses by 2017.
- Ensuring a minimum of five civil and construction contracts per year valued at over $5 million are awarded to joint venture proposals with Indigenous businesses.

Specific Commitment

In addition to the above Labor proposes to:

- Work with indigenous communities and their representative organisations to ensure that the Government and indigenous people living in communities engage in economic development and growth in the manner and at the pace they wish to proceed.
- Bring together industry, the business community, indigenous representative groups and indigenous communities to plan for growth, jobs and development. The days of imposing plans on communities are over. Indigenous people will be partners in growth and development.
- Ensure that indigenous communities receive strong infrastructure spending programs, particularly focussed on providing housing, to ensure opportunities for work will be created in these communities.
- Ensure that funding, particularly infrastructure funding, is devolved where possible to shires and regional authorities to promote local employment.
- Work with communities and employers to recognise broader concepts of employment and more flexible working arrangements. In particular, as part of the Labor Government’s focus on children from 0-4, employ local people in the task of supporting the development and protection of children in each community.
Employment targets

Labor will set employment targets in key Government fields.

We endorse the Indigenous Employment Strategy but additionally will make a strong push to train Indigenous people in the delivery of key Government services. This will be particularly focused on remote and regional towns and communities where a churning workforce provides challenges to service delivery.

We will make a strong push to place local people into jobs in remote and regional communities, as well as in the public sector in Darwin and Palmerston.

Specific Commitment

To lift indigenous involvement in the workforce Labor will introduce key sector targets and will focus training funding on achieving those targets.

Our focus will initially be on the Departments of Education and Health and the Police, Fire and Emergency Services.

Labor will aim to have 500 more indigenous people filling a role as a teacher, police officer or nurse by 2026. (Base year 2016.)

Indigenous Skills Development Generally

Specific Commitment

Labor will:

- work with indigenous Territorians and industry to target training for trades
- Reposition the existing Indigenous Responsive training program and the Indigenous Workforce Participation Initiatives Program to better align the two for job outcomes in regions and to leverage Australian Government initiatives
- Introduce a specific Indigenous pre-employment/apprenticeship program to provide specific training for unskilled or semi-skilled Indigenous Territorians to gain essential industry skills that lead to jobs. This will be linked where possible to Australian Government programs
- Fund Foundation skills for Indigenous workers who require increased literacy and numeracy in the workplace to advance in their careers; and
- Introduce a strong skills and careers focussed program into schools across the Territory. This will be outlined in more detail in the Skilling Students At School to be released in the near future.
Leadership and Executive Positions

Labor believes that the Government must undertake greater levels of leadership capacity building and training with Indigenous Territorians. As part of Labor’s plans to devolve more of the operations of Government to Indigenous communities Labor will invest in the capacity building of people to ensure they are able to take on these responsibilities effectively.

Specific Commitment

Labor will establish an advisory group that will work with communities and indigenous leadership to nourish, support and grow young indigenous leaders. The advisory group made up of indigenous leaders, indigenous organisations, industry, business, unions, and the leadership of the public sector.

This group will recommend programs designed to support young indigenous leaders and will work with those young people, their families and their communities to ensure young people are supported through them.

Participants will be mentored in leadership programs in organisations, the private sector and the Government- local, Territory and Australian.

They will receive intensive leadership training including training in courses such as the company director’s course.

Working arrangements will be made to ensure that they are supported with a living wage while they undertake this program.

The aim of this advisory group is to significantly lift the number of indigenous people in leadership and executive positions across the Territory. The Advisory Group will identify the successful participants, oversee the program and find job placements at the end of their training.
Indigenous Skills Innovation Project

Specific Commitment

Through cooperation with the Desert Knowledge Centre in Alice Springs Labor will introduce a focussed indigenous innovation project.

Indigenous knowledge about the environment, plants and animals, herbal medicines, climate, science and many other areas is underutilised across Australia. Significant research is underway in the Territory and Labor believes the Government must be closely connected to and understanding of what that research is showing.

In particular Labor will undertake work with the Desert Knowledge to map where indigenous skills and knowledge can be formed as jobs for Indigenous Territorians.

Skilling Students at School

Labor will provide a separate discussion paper on skilling Indigenous students as part of the Skills at School that will be released separately.
Chapter Five

Growing Jobs by Attracting More People to the Territory
One of the most significant threats to the economic future of the Northern Territory is the loss of skilled and trained people interstate and a slow population growth.

The Territory needs a growing population.

To successfully provide the opportunities that our community needs we need to grow. A small Territory will not allow the scale of economy necessary to provide for the future employment, economic, social and educational opportunities Territorians will need.

Our children need a growing Territory.

The Territory’s population growth levels are now in a critical state. The Australian Bureau of Statistics population report indicates that the Territory now has the slowest population growth in the nation and population loss to interstate migration is worse than ever.

Population growth in 2014 according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics is 0.4%. In 2014 the Territory lost 3329 more people interstate than it gained. These are the worst figures in more than 20 years.

The growth that is occurring is largely natural population growth. That means our growth is centred on new born babies and this presents challenges to the Territory economy.

Population growth is a driver of GST receipts and therefore critical to our financial future.

Labor will work to increase population growth. The focus of our efforts will be based on growing the number of jobs in our economy and ensuring people have a reason to move here, live here and stay here.

### Specific Commitment

In addition to growing jobs Labor will also:

1. **Undertake research into what keeps people in the Territory and what pressures push them to leave**

   While tackling the issue of slowing population growth and high interstate migration it is critical valid research identifying the factors influencing Territorians in making the decision to stay and also the decision to leave is important preliminary work for the Government. This research will be undertaken and will help inform the Government in its actions.

   This research will not just be focussed on Darwin and Palmerston but will include Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine in its work. Different parts of the Territory will have different reasons for people moving or staying.
2. A package that places downward pressure on the cost of living

There is no doubt that the cost of living is a significant factor in pushing Territorians interstate. A comprehensive, Territory wide plan for putting downward pressure on the cost of living will be adopted by a Labor Government. This plan will be detailed in a future discussion paper.

This too will look outside of the Darwin and Palmerston region as the cost of goods and services across the regional and remote Territory are higher than those in the metropolitan area.

3. Provide more aged care housing options

Territorians have told Labor that the lack of retirement options, especially in regional centres, is a major disincentive to staying in the Territory. Territorians want more retirement villages and retirement options that are compatible with people’s ethnic background, language and cultural mores.

Labor believes that it critical for older Territorians to stay. This also works to keep young families here so grandparents and grandchildren can be together.

In Government Labor will undertake public consultation with senior Territorians and those approaching retirement regarding the provision of more housing options. The results of this consultation will be made available to the building industry, non-Government organisations and others who may find this information useful.

One particular priority will be a public discussion with residents of the Darwin and Palmerston rural area regarding retirement village options in their area. Labor will also hold discussions with community leaders in major growth communities regarding senior housing options. In our policy on Remote Housing Labor has committed to the development of an extensive “granny flat” program.

Labor will direct capital funds to the development of further retirement housing options for those eligible for public housing.

4. Education options

Education options have been identified as a reason for some people leaving the Territory. Labor will invest in improving schools and this will be released as a separate policy paper.

However, Labor will continue to pursue options for expanding secondary education choices for parents. We endorse the current efforts to attract a further private secondary school campus to Darwin and Palmerston and will continue them.

Further, Labor will continue to work with the Charles Darwin University,
Batchelor Institute for Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) and the Australian Government to strengthen tertiary and further education in the Territory. A Labor Government introduced the medical school at the Charles Darwin University providing options for young Territorians to remain in the Territory while learning to be doctors. We will continue to support efforts to retain young Territorians in the Territory through our university options.

5. Expanding and supporting the arts, culture, sports and lifestyle of Territorians

Labor will invest in improving, expanding and supporting the arts, culture, sports and lifestyle options of Territorians. We believe that our lifestyle is an important part of keeping people in the Territory.

Labor will release a separate policy paper on our support for the Territory lifestyle.

6. Innovation and ideas

Labor believes that by creating an innovative leading edge Territory we will attract and retain Territorians. This is why Labor has emphasised policies that foster and develop creativity and innovation. This is critical for retaining our youth.
The Territory needs a Government that is planning for the future and is ready to hit the ground running.

This position paper is a part of a suite of economic policies. It is part of an ongoing policy discussion which has already involved meeting many people right across the Territory. We have also held numerous public forums to date with more planned.

We want to hear from you regarding the plans outlined in this paper and any other questions or suggestions you have.

Tell us what you think about the ideas in this document.

You can let us know your thoughts by emailing opposition.leader@nt.gov.au or by calling 08 8928 6668.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts and continuing our discussion in this crucial policy area for the Territory’s future.