Population decline a huge concern

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Opposition Leader Gary Higgins will today call for a whole-of-government approach to population growth as crucial to developing the Northern Territory economy and creating jobs.

“After 15 years of population growth, Budget forecasts show Labor will preside over a population reduction of .3 per cent this financial year,” Mr Higgins said.

“By 2020 we will have seen a decade of growth in population numbers wiped away. The equivalent of the people who have made the Territory their home in the past decade will be washed off our bottom line.

“It is the Opposition’s view that a population approaching 300,000 is not an unreasonable expectation for the Territory by the middle of the century.

“But to achieve that there needs to be a population plan to drive growth in an economy with declining population – and there needs to be more than lip-service paid to this serious growth hurdle.

“The policies of this Labor Government appear counter to a sustainable population policy.

“They have blocked measures that will create jobs and move people to the Territory such as on-shore gas development, and the measures they have announced to boost population, like new museums and part public holidays, will have zero impact.

“Our plan is to develop strategic, wealth creating infrastructure to support defence and civilian service capability. We want a focus on energy, minerals, tourism, agribusiness, international education and training, defence, supply and service.

“We want to see a safe and regulated on-shore gas industry; increased tourism marketing and upgraded infrastructure, a greater focus on Asia.

“What we have actually seen is cuts to spending by Labor in the areas of Primary Industry and Resources, Tourism and Culture and Asian Engagement and Trade.

“By 2030 the Asian middle class will grow from 600 million to almost three billion and it is this growth that offers the Northern Territory unparalleled opportunity. We need a population plan to capitalise on this and identify other opportunities as they emerge.”
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