The NT Government’s Population Strategy Issues Paper was launched today by Chief Minister, Clare Martin.

The document gives Territorians the opportunity to comment on ways to retain and attract more people to the Territory, and will form the basis of the Government’s Population Strategy.

"In order to build the Territory economically, there is a need for the establishment of an integrated population plan covering the next 20 years," Ms Martin said.

"A key objective of this Issues Paper is to ensure that, in the process of investigating Territory Population Policy strategies, there is vigorous and open public discussion within the community."

Ms Martin said integral to the document was the issue of accelerating population growth through greater migration into the Territory.

"We are lucky to live in a vibrant, multicultural society, but in recent years the Territory has not fully utilised opportunities to bring in more skilled and business migrants.

"There is certainly scope for the Government to take a more proactive approach to promote the Territory as a desirable migration destination.

"It may be that we need to consider incentives for overseas and interstate migration to the Territory, so the Government could consider specific strategies which will encourage greater numbers of business and skilled overseas migrants."

The Population Strategy was identified as a priority at the Government’s Economic Development Summit last year, and formed a key objective of the subsequent Economic Development Strategy.

"While the Territory has the highest birth rate in Australia, the lack of what was seen as a ‘critical mass’ in the population of the Territory underpinned many of the discussions at the summit.

"Many in the business community expressed the belief that a bigger population would automatically bring higher economic growth rates and new opportunities."

Ms Martin said that with indigenous communities recording particularly high birth rates any population strategy would involve providing good health, education and other services to these communities.

"We need a long-term plan to ensure population growth, over the next 20 years, allows the Territory to develop as a place of opportunity for all its people.

"This Government is determined to create social and economic opportunities and a strategic plan for population growth is integral to that."