Chief Minister, Clare Martin, today said that the Electoral Commission decision that the Northern Territory would lose one of its Federal seats was stupidity and should not happen.

"As Chief Minister I will be contacting the Federal Government to convince them to enact legislation to secure two Federal seats for the Territory regardless of population changes," she said.

"It’s ludicrous that such a small drop in population would have this effect - the Territory needs and deserves two Federal seats.

"The Northern Territory covers a huge area and has a diverse population – it needs strong Federal representation.

"I will be writing to the Commonwealth Government and lobbying them to reverse this decision to reduce the number of Federal seats for the Territory at the next election."

Ms Martin said that new methodology, used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to determine population, did not give an accurate picture of the Northern Territory.

"There is a strong case that the ABS figures are actually inaccurate for the Territory," she said.

The Chief Minister also criticised comments by the Opposition that this year’s small decline was new, producing statistics showing that interstate migration to the Territory had been in decline since 1997.

"There has been an easing off in population after the Defence build up, but it was masked for many years by a high Indigenous birth rate," she said.

"The situation of a declining population has been occurring for the past six years. To say this is a new situation is extremely deceptive and clearly very ill informed.

"While previous administrations failed to reverse a declining population, this Government recognised the problem and released its population strategy in August last year and is working on ways to create jobs and attract more people to the Territory.

"We have already seen the level of unemployment in the Territory drop and the number of jobs created increase under this Government compared to the previous administration."

Ms Martin said that the Government was focused on reversing population decline by:

- Facilitating major job creating projects such as the Wickham Point LNG plant, Alcan Gove development and Macarthur River Mine expansion.
- Working with major defence projects such as the Eurocopter squadrons coming to Darwin, Bradshaw Development and Defence housing expansion.
- Addressing why people leave Territory and what will make them stay such as more local jobs, better schools, healthier hospitals and safer suburbs.

"We’re spending more on education, implementing Learning Lessons report,
reforming the Health Department, employing more nurses and police, and dealing with the significant problem of drug related crime which the Leader of Opposition still says doesn’t exist," Ms Martin said.

"We’re working to make these major projects a reality and to maximise local content and quality jobs for Territorians – this potential is recognised in recent ABS data that predicts strong economic growth for the Territory."