

# City to keep migrant status

**KIM WHEATLEY**  
CHIEF REPORTER

ADELAIDE will retain its special migration status – a program which has helped the state boost its population growth for the first time in 16 years.

Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews will make the announcement at an economic development breakfast today, following lobbying by the state's business community.

Business leaders say the decision is critical to the state's future and helps secure skilled workers for such projects as Roxby Downs and increases key student migration.

The announcement also underlines the importance of South Australia's five marginal seats.

Adelaide is the only capital city to qualify for regional status. That provides more points to potential mi-

grants, who eventually wish to gain permanent residency. "I came to the conclusion that SA is unique in a sense that it has had this very low population growth rate," Mr Andrews said.

"It's got the oldest population in Australia, has had the lowest fertility rate in Australia and it also had a fairly major exodus of young people. There are some special circumstances that mean that it makes sense to retain the regional status."

SA's population last year rose more than 1 per cent for the first time since 1991, compared with the national average of 1.4 per cent. The population grew by 16,100, to 1.57 million.

Business leaders, who have been lobbying the Federal Government for months, said the decision gave the state a significant competitive edge.

"This status is critical for SA and our economy," said Australian Population In-

stitute chairman Michael Hickinbotham.

"It's fantastic news for the state. It underpins our economy and projects like

## **“ Fantastic news for the state**

Roxby Downs are now a lot more secure. That project could well have been in jeopardy if Adelaide had lost its regional status."

Mr Hickinbotham, who also is a member of the state Economic Development Board, said regional status also provided an advantage over interstate universities.

"Because we're able to market high-quality education and, at the end of that, a visa," he said.

"This is an incredibly competitive field and most people don't realise overseas education is our fourth biggest export earner, so its big money."