

Grants to the young one way to keep them in SA: Libs

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THE “woeful” loss of young people to other states might be slowed by giving them grants to be invested in South Australian real estate, Opposition spokeswoman on population Vickie Chapman believes.

The State Government’s campaign aimed at “bringing home” SA expatriates had been a failure, she said, with the Opposition calculating that it cost \$70,000 for each inquiry the campaign generated.

“Why don’t we just say to these kids, ‘here’s \$15,000 that you can put towards owning a piece of SA before you leave the state,’” she said.

It was “fantastic” for young people to see the world but they would “have an investment back here that you can rent out in the meantime”.

Treasurer Kevin Foley said it was not a “bad thing that young people leave, provided that we get people coming back the other way”.

Good jobs and SA’s high-quality, affordable lifestyle were the keys to bringing people back.

“We need to get more of our young people exposed to the international mar-

ketplace – because they’ll come back better, brighter and smarter,” he said.

SA has been fighting to increase its population, with the state strategic plan setting a target of two million by 2050.

A BankSA report last week found the state had ended its link to the fortunes of manufacturing as the driver of population.

The turnaround has been attributed to attracting skilled migrants, using regional visas.

Mr Foley said the visas “are getting up the nose of WA”, which is lobbying the Commonwealth for the same status.

Business SA chief executive Peter Vaughan said the state must increase its population or “our ability to fight for SA’s position on the national stage is going to decline each and every decade”.

University of Adelaide professor of geography Graeme Hugo said SA “households currently are growing at twice the rate of the population”.

This was because of divorce and separation and older people remaining in their homes longer, he told a university forum.

The change had big implications for businesses supplying services.