

Luring more people will be state priority

GREG KELTON
STATE EDITOR

AN EFFORT to lift South Australia's population to two million well before its target of 2050 will be led by Monsignor David Cappo.

Business SA chief executive Peter Vaughan, Tourism Commission deputy chairwoman Anne Skipper and Michael Hickinbotham of the Hickinbotham Group will join Monsignor Cappo in a year-long task aimed at developing strategies to attract more people to SA and to retain our young people.

One of the first tasks will be ensuring SA maintains its regional visa status, under which migrants are given extra points towards their visa if they choose to live in SA.

Premier Mike Rann said SA was on track to meet its target 20 years ahead but the new group would help ensure "we do it in an environmentally sustainable way, while ensuring community cohesion".

"With its business links, the group will also help in the attraction, placement and retention of skilled and business migrants," he said.

SA's population has reached 1.5 million and in the latest ABS figures, the state grew by 1 per cent, or 16,100 in the year to December, 2006 - the best performance since 1991.

The Australian Population Institute, of which Mr Hickinbotham is chairman, says SA needs 416,000 more

people to reach the two million target and this means an average growth of 9674 people each year for the next 43 years.

Monsignor Cappo said the group - to be known as the SA Population Ambassadors Group - had the expertise to find out what was working and if something was not working, to adjust it.

"In fact, we would like to accelerate things over the next few years, considering we have the mining boom and defence industry issues," he said.

"We really do need a massive influx of skilled migrants into the state and we are going to really focus on that.

"We are putting an injection

of significant energy into this for this year.”

Ms Skipper said one strategy was targeting young people in the education sector and retaining them, saying: “We have a huge opportunity to capitalise on this given what opportunities we have in the mining sector.

“Generation Y are different so you have to make it more attractive for them to stay here and articulating the work-life balance opportunities in a much more explicit way.”

Mr Vaughan said a concerted campaign was needed interstate because they were the easiest people to move in the migration sense and many of them had ties and family and had been here before “so it’s an easy sell”.

Mr Hickinbotham said it was all about making SA the destination of choice and to change the rules relating to recognition of skills.

He said one of the disincentives facing prospective migrants was the myriad of rules that were difficult for workers to navigate their way through to have their overseas qualifications recognised.



MOVERS: Michael Hickinbotham, Anne Skipper, David Cappel and Peter Vaughan.

Picture: RUSSELL MILLARD