

## Migrants at 20-year high

# MORE MAKE HOME IN SA

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SOUTH Australia has achieved its highest share of immigrants in 20 years and experts predict a continuing influx.

But business leaders have warned the intake must rapidly increase in order for the state to avert a "population crisis".

Latest Immigration Department figures show 4396 people moved to SA from overseas in the six months to December - 6.7 per cent of the national intake and a significant increase for a population much smaller than those of the eastern states.

It is the state's highest share since 1985-86, when 5.3 per cent of Australia's immigrants - a total of 4923 - chose to settle in SA.

However, latest Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show the state's net population loss to other states was 3483 in 2004-05.

University of Adelaide demographer Professor Graeme Hugo has attributed the state's increase to immigration schemes that make it easier for people to migrate to underpopulated areas.

SA's immigration increase comes as the New South Wales share continues to decline.

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AFFORDABLE: Permanent resident Clara Spencer at home in Happy Valley.

Picture: TRICIA JOHNSON

## Migrant share at 20-year high

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While Australia's most populated state still attracts the largest number of migrants - 22,956 in the six months to December - its share has declined to 34.9 per cent from a peak of 44.7 per cent in 1995-1996.

Western Australia and Queensland also increased their share of immigrants, receiving 13.5 and 18.7 per cent respectively.

Prof Hugo said South Australia's skills shortage was also attracting skilled workers from overseas.

"There's a significant number of skilled migrants coming, so it's a really big change because previously it was overwhelmingly refugees," he said. SA's immigration share was now nearly equal to its population share.

While he predicted the state's migration intake would continue to grow, he

said more needed to be done to stem the number of young people leaving the state.

"Having got the migrants here, the challenge is to retain them," he said.

Premier Mike Rann said he was "delighted at the upturn in migration".

He said the State Government would continue to market SA around the world "as

the Far North would create many more job opportunities for skilled migrants.

Business SA chief executive Peter Vaughan welcomed the increase in migration as a "step in the right direction", but said many more migrants were needed as the population aged and young people were lost to the eastern states. "We will be the only state in Australia

grants a year over the next 10 years to bring its population up to two million by 2015. The State Government's goal of achieving this population target by 2050 would be "too late".

Immigration Department spokesman Sandi Logan said SA was "continuing to attract more migrants and a large number of them are helping address critical skills shortages across the state".

Clara Spencer came to Australia from Canada almost a year ago, and was awarded permanent residency in February.

Ms Spencer has worked for a sustainable architecture firm and in hospitality since moving here.

Ms Spencer and her partner, Jacob Ross, visited Sydney over summer and talked about moving there. "But when you come to Adelaide you realise it's much more affordable," she said.

### “ A step in the right direction

a destination". "Obviously people go where the action is," he said.

"Right from the start, with our economic development strategy, it's been about generating economic growth and confidence in SA and ultimately, people will go where there are job opportunities."

Mr Rann said the \$6 billion air warfare destroyer project and the Olympic Dam uranium mine expansion in

which will have a population decline.

"We are not going to get (a population increase) by all running off and having children. It ain't happening. The only way it can happen is by a massive increase of migration. We need to attract more young, entrepreneurial, risk-taking people of marrying age."

Mr Vaughan said SA needed to attract 50,000 mi-