

Population grows in SA

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Australia recorded its largest annual population increase ever this year bringing the nations population to about 20.9 million, but SA's growth is still lagging behind other states.

Australia had an annual growth rate of 1.5 per cent, of which overseas migration accounted for more than half. 162,600 migrants arrived on our shores. SA's population grew by one per cent, equal last place with NSW.

The SA Government has committed to a Population Strategy and set a population target of two million people by 2050.

To achieve this, the state needs to achieve an annual growth rate of 0.57 per cent, which it exceeded in the past year.

Chairman of the Australian Population Institute (SA) Michael Hickinbotham says the recent statistics are a fantastic achievement for SA.

"In the past year we had 12,000 migrants, which is a 35 year-high," he said. "We are now crawling up the list and our population growth is higher than NSW and ahead of Tasmania. This is a growth we have not seen before."

Mr Hickinbotham said the state gov-

ernment set up the Population Unit to achieve the goals and now other states are copying. He said NSW lost 10,000 people last year and has now set up a similar unit.

"We are now on track to achieve our population target of two million by 2050 and in fact we will do it well before then."

SA's Regional Visa Status has helped achieve this result, he said.

"South Australia is the only mainland capital city with a Regional Visa Status which means migrants who don't fulfill the 120 points to come to Australia can come to SA provided they meet certain criteria," he said.

"There were also 20,000 overseas students last year and we are hoping to increase this to 30,000 within three years."

South Australian Democrats MP Sandra Kanck says she does not consider population growth as good news. "The good news is that South Australia was second bottom in population growth," she said.

"When we are having difficulties in supplying water and looking for ways to find solutions to these existing problems we should not be deliberately canvassing for population growth.

"This can be looked at after we have found solutions to our problems."