

Will Hodgman MP
Leader of the State Opposition
Monday 11 August, 2008

Population Debate Welcome

Leader of the State Opposition Will Hodgman, today called for debate to focus on growing Tasmania's population, not capping it. While Mr Hodgman has welcomed discussion on the matter, it remains important for Tasmania to be proactive and seek innovative solutions to its population challenges.

Mr Hodgman's comments follow remarks made by former Greens candidate and Sustainable Population Australia's Tasmanian spokesman Tom Nilsson suggesting Tasmania limit its population to 500,000.

Mr Hodgman's vision for Tasmania places issues of demographics and migration as central pillars for the development and prosperity of the State. Mr Hodgman has long championed the need for Tasmania to focus on becoming a magnet for young, innovative and creative people.

"A focused migration policy that seeks to attract young, innovative and creative people to Tasmania can only serve to benefit Tasmania," Mr Hodgman said.

"We should look at ways to grow the population, not limit growth.

"Tasmania is in an excellent position to utilise a targeted migration policy that will bolster the state's population and advance wider development and a 'can do' attitude is essential to achieving this.

"We have a vision and strategy to address the very real problems posed by Tasmania's migration and demographic issues," Mr Hodgman said.

Elements of the plan include:

- making Tasmania a hub of excellence in education for students from around the world;
- aggressively pursuing high-end industries such as information and communications technology, agribusiness, research and development; improving our skills base to attract new business here;

- addressing negative perceptions of Tasmania held by younger people who have left the State;
- addressing the shortage and cost of childcare, and affordable housing, to make Tasmania more attractive to younger working families; and
- creating a more vibrant cultural social and entertainment environment for younger people.

Mr Hodgman today repeated his call for decisive action. The State Government's complete lack of vision on the matter is yet another hurdle Tasmania must now overcome.

Further information: Ella Woods-Joyce- 0418 338 774.