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Madam Speaker I rise to respond to the Chief Minister's statement in relation to the Northern Territory Population Strategy 2018-2028.

Territorians have waited two years for this Government to come up with a plan to drive population growth.

This situation in the Territory is grave when it comes to population growth. Budget 17/18 saw a negative population growth figure of 0.3 %. A forecast decline in population, this was the first time in 14 years.

To make things worse Budget 18/19 saw the population growth forecast come in at negative 0.7% for Financial Year 18/19. More than twice as bad as the previous year.

So the pace of the drop is accelerating.

Clearly Madam Speaker, this Labour Government has been asleep at the wheel.

While the Government has been asleep at the wheel hundreds of good Territory owned businesses have gone broke, and their employees and families lost.

What the Opposition want to talk about is realism...

One year ago I brought a motion to this house calling on the government to work with the parliament as a whole to develop strategies and initiatives to grow the population of the Northern Territory.

During the recent estimates hearings the Chief Minister said and I Quote "in the August sittings we should have a population conversation as a parliament but we will release the final strategy before then" end quote.

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Chief Minister we had a conversation in this house a year ago, a conversation that I note that you didn't participate in.

A conversation you didn't have with the Chamber of Commerce before your release of this population plan either. To quote Greg Bicknell on ABC radio on 20 August 'I was never consulted on the Population Plan, no'. This is damning, and explains why Mr. Bicknell went on to say today in the NT News that the Population Strategy is 'meaningless'.

So here we have 12 months later, with great fanfare, the release of the 10 year strategy, **and a free lunch for 200 people who already live here.**

How is a free lunch going to increase our declining population and why aren't you spending this money instead on frontline services like police on the beat given our state of lawlessness, which is well known throughout the country and overseas.

We don't live in a bubble Chief Minister, perhaps you do.

We in the Opposition live in the real world where we have a state of lawlessness, prisoner escapes, prisoners travelling free at will without escorts, sexual assaults of vulnerable children and anti- social behaviour played out in the national media week after week.

Get real Chief Minister you need to address these things that you call perceptions and myths **and change them now, not in 20 years' time** as you pursue your generational change agenda.

If you ever want people to relocate here from interstate and overseas you need to do both fix the problems NOW and for future generations. The crime is being committed by today's generation.

And let's not forget this population strategy is all wrapped up in the new meaningless purple 'Boundless Possible' slogan.

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Great marketing and successful slogans and positioning statements evoke great emotion.

Madam Speaker the only thing this slogan evokes is confusion and bewilderment!

If we have landscapes that are the envy of the world as your forward states Chief Minister why do we not take great pride in the richness of the blues, the greens and the ochre of this great Northern Territory, why do we have to change it just for the sake of change?

I think if you look out across the great vastness of this 1.3 million square kilometers you will be lucky to see any purple unless you see some of the color changes at Ayers Rock at particular times during the year.

But let me move on because after all the color that you go on about and spend thousands of Territorian's dollars on in your advertising campaign is just decoration in marketing terms.

Let me now turn to some of the detail in the strategy.

This plan identifies handouts of up to \$15,250 for people, ideally young women and former territorians, referred to as expats or alumni.

While it is a sad state of affairs to have to pay anyone, to bribe them to come to our beautiful Territory, it is more troubling when we consider that this Population plan has no strategy to keep those new people.

Yes, it is great to win new people, to attract them. But what are we doing to keep the people today.

Labor used to be about fairness.

Labor used to care about working families or those struggling to make ends meet.

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How can the Chief Minister justify his decision to give \$15,250 to blow-ins, when hard pressed Territorians in Darwin and Palmerston underwater with debt, and seeing their home value drop like a rock?

They are trapped in negative equity, and many of these real people in Darwin and Palmerston have seen their pay frozen, hours cut, or worse redundancies.

The other reality is that if Territorians haven't lost their jobs they are suffering from an unprecedented, unparalleled, and unbelievable crime wave.

Our beautiful Territory is being crippled by a chronic crime crisis.

This Labor Government has put its head in the sand and tried to wish it weren't so but the reality is that hope or wishing crime away is not a solution.

So what young female professional wants to come to a jurisdiction with the highest assault and burglary rates not only in Australia but the world?

The first principle of attracting people, and growing the population is to recognise that a prosperous Territory is a safe, secure Territory.

We know that the only real measure to pull people here is a job.

Jobs attract people not catch phrases or colours.

Jobs enable people to get ahead not glossy brochures or weekly emails.

Jobs, Madam Speaker, put cash in the pockets of Territorians.

Labor takes cash out of Territorians' pockets year after year, more every time.

Successive Labor budgets have seen consistent hikes in the fees for government services.

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And the Opposition know that the Labor Government have looked at every lazy tax grab including a land tax, because they feel like they can punish long term Territorians.

What do Territorians who live here get? Madam speaker I will tell you what they get firstly a further slug of 50.4 million dollars. Just add this to the spiralling debt of \$7.5 Billion dollars is that what you are asking of Territorians Chief Minister?

I read with great astonishment the Chief Ministers words in his speech when he said and I quote

“I’ve heard some comments along the lines of why you don’t spend that money on the people you have already got. We spend more than \$6 billion a year on territorians in the budget” end quote

Chief Minister this is one of the most arrogant and dismissive statements I have ever heard spoken in this Chamber. This is not your money Chief Minister, you are entrusted by those who elect you to manage the money that in the main is provided by the Commonwealth Government and those own source revenues that you as a Government raise.

It is a legitimate question being asked by those territorians who your government consistently describe as doing it tough.

You are not listening to territorians Chief Minister, 95% of comments on radio, on social media and in the paper are totally opposed to you treating them with such contempt.

Let me quote a few:

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“What about Territorians who have made the NT home for 50 odd years, raised their families up here and paid taxes? Where are our incentives to stay and retire here, none whatsoever? That’s the reason people are leaving”. And

“Not looking after Territorians first as usual. There are so many locals who can’t find full time work and if they do find a job they are lucky to get 4 hours a day”

And again

“Fix the crime first and people in those job sectors might actually stay. Therefore no need to pay people to move here, therefore saving money to spend on more important things”.

“They will leave when money runs out, cost of living killing people”

And I could go on but I ask the government to listen to what people are saying, value Territorians.

Your government put up vehicle registration in 2017, by \$60 for a 4WD, you put it up again in 2018 by at least another \$100 on that same 4WD.

But now you are giving people that have never lived or paid tax here, \$15250 to pay their vehicle registration.

Madam Speaker let me state for the benefit of Members of this House **I do support sensible and sustainable growth of our population.**

I remind members what I said in this House a year ago.

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Population growth is key to the long term health of the Northern Territory economy.

Population is absolutely critical when it comes to the Territory's share of GST revenue.

Future distributions from the GST pool will depend on how our population stacks up as a percentage of the national population.

This issue is arguably the single most important factor in the health of the Territory economy and society,

We need to position the Northern Territory as a place to live and work achieving sustainable population growth;

It is clear that the old mantra of 'populate or perish' is true in the Northern Territory.

The Northern Territory and cities like Darwin and Palmerston are exciting places to be, as change happens right before our eyes.

Every Territorian has a chance to be a part of this great big building project.

We need to tell this story- the story of building and growing an exciting, dynamic, vibrant place ...of positioning the Territory as THE place to live work and to enjoy our fantastic lifestyle.

And it is that other big story, on shore gas, that will help us immensely in attracting those bright, ambitious people to the Northern Territory.

Modelling by Deloitte Access Economics puts the number of jobs associated with onshore gas in the Beetaloo Basin alone at over 6000.

These are high skilled, high wage, sustainable jobs.

Madam Speaker, private investors are looking at the Territory and asking themselves 'why?'

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Why would they take the risk?

Why risk having the Government coming in at the last minute and changing the rules of the game?

That is exactly what we have seen with the Dan Murphy's case, or the hybrid mining tax, or at Blake Street.

A year on we still have major uncertainty in the oil and gas and resource sectors. We know from the Association of Mining & Exploration Companies (AMEC) that this economically incompetent government's world worst hybrid mining tax is putting at risk \$6 billion of investment and over 4000 jobs.

This Government is making doing business in the Territory so much more difficult for our resources sector.

There is so much more uncertainty.

The desirability of staying in the Territory is now under question.

The CLP believe that we should be making it easier for our resources sector and not harder and putting hurdles in their way as is this Labor Government.

We know from the Association of Mining & Exploration Companies (AMEC) that there is over \$5 billion worth of investment at stake.

Madam Speaker here is the opportunity for this labor government to encourage private sector investment and long term sustainable jobs, here is an opportunity to increase our population.

Unnecessary uncertainty does nothing to support domestic or foreign private investment in the NT.

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The NT ranks poorly for tax competitiveness on the review from the Fraser Institute at only 40th on its taxation regime list in 2017.

The resources sector will be critical to securing the NT's long term economic success.

Grow the population Madam Speaker through private sector investment and not an additional burden of \$50 million imposed on territorians.

It is quite amazing that the Government in launching this Population Plan has failed to mention even once our special agreement with the Commonwealth called the NT Designated Area Migration Agreement or NT DAMA.

This important agreement between the NT Government and the Commonwealth gives small and medium sized NT businesses concessions around the 457 or temporary skilled worker sponsorship criteria.

We know that over 95% of all businesses in the NT are small businesses. The NT DAMA is a huge advantage for these businesses when one recognises that similar small businesses in Northern WA and Queensland have no access to special concessions as they do not have a DAMA.

More amazingly, is that this unique advantage for the Territory when it comes to migration policy (we are the only jurisdiction to have a special deal with the Commonwealth and this was won by the previous CLP government) was left to expire by the current Labor Government.

I'll say it again, this Labor Government has failed to renew the DAMA.

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This Labor Government has dropped the ball on securing a new special deal for the Territory.

This Labor Government is simply not delivering for Territorians, in spite of what their many press releases claim.

One of my consistent concerns with this government is the lack of critical success measures for their strategies that they roll out. Short in detail and short in KPIs. The answer we most often get and here it is again plans will be developed and we will monitor progress.

The Opposition question the value and effectiveness of \$50.4 million for 'welcome packs'.

How will this be evaluated?

I quote from page 17 of the Population Strategy "The research recommends that "a 'welcome pack' should be developed for interstate migrants both to encourage them to update Medicare and other records, and to lead them to an online and ongoing survey to track their experience of embedding themselves in the Territory in the first five years of their stay... and an opt-out email address should also be collected for the purpose of 'staying in touch' with those who leave the Territory".

So the research is already planning on these new arrivals leaving!

Not very convincing.

Madam Speaker that is simply not good enough. We need to ensure we have performance measures to determine whether this strategy is successful or not. This is yet another half-baked strategy.

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Madam Speaker I will conclude my remarks by saying to this Government get your house in order and encourage private sector investment for both will see a growth in our economy, more jobs and sensible and sustainable growth in our population.

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