

It's just not sustainable

SUSTAINABLE Population Australia SA Branch president Peter Martin says the population debate is well overdue and linking it to the asylum seeker issue is a red herring.

Asylum seekers contribute only one per cent to Australia's population growth, sustainable populationists argue.

"For decades the evidence has been mounting that growth in our numbers does not necessarily translate to higher per capita income, let alone a higher level of human wellbeing," Mr Martin says. "What is quite clear, however, is that population growth makes all our environmental problems a whole lot harder to solve.

"That applies to carbon emissions, more demand for less water, our dependence on fossil energy and other non-renewable re-

sources, waste to landfill, declining biodiversity, suburbs sprawling over valuable food-producing land near cities, inadequate infrastructure, high housing costs, urban and traffic congestion and the increasing stress associated with city living."

South Australian Civic Trust spokesman Darian Hiles says careful planning is needed because population is likely to increase regardless of the current political debate.

"There are limits to what our natural resources can sustain so what politicians should do is encourage industries that benefit Australians within this capacity," he says.

"We need to identify the capacity restraints, including water, the amount of pollution we can sustain, adequate land for food and agriculture and the eco-

systems necessary for the health of the land as well as demand for all this by the population.

"The growing conflict between urban development and loss of agricultural land is a classic example."

Stable Population Party of Australia convenor William Bourke said population growth led to people being worse, not better off.

He criticises the logic used by population proponents that gross domestic product (GDP) is the main indicator of our national wealth.

That GDP includes, he argues, many large infrastructure projects like new schools, hospitals, roads and public transport networks which are demanded by the increased population, but built at a direct cost to the existing population.