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POPULATION GROWTH

Mr GRIFFITHS (Goyder) (12:56): I indicate that I do not support the motion from the member for Fisher. There are many things that the member says in this house with which I do agree, but not this one. I think the population of South Australia does need to increase to 2 million, and it is vital for the future of this state. As evidence for that, I will provide some detail on the workforce needs of this state as we approach the next 10 years.

Currently, there is a good workforce environment. There are 775,000 South Australians in work, but I am told by very well-credentialed people that, over the next eight to 10 years, there will be a need for 340,000 new people to enter the South Australian workforce to replace those who are retiring, and through economic growth opportunities. The retiring numbers are something like 300,000. That indicates the immense number of people born during the war and immediately after the war—the baby boomer generation, which I think goes until about 1962; which is my year of birth—

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson interjecting:

Mr GRIFFITHS: The Attorney confirms that I am at the tail end of the baby boomers. With 300,000 people retiring, a lot of important skills and knowledge, economic growth and business acumen is being taken away from the workforce, so it is really important that we get more people in the state to fill that void. The development opportunities which will occur over the next 10 years and which will require the additional 40,000 people cannot be met from the existing population.

There is no doubt that unemployment is at 4.8 per cent and youth unemployment is at 18 per cent—that fluctuates between 17 per cent and about 25 per cent for most months.

The Hon. R.B. Such interjecting:

Mr GRIFFITHS: As the member for Fisher confirms, it is a dodgy figure because it relies on a youth between the ages of 15 and 19 seeking employment where he or she only has to work for one hour per week. However, it is important because the workforce planning needs really do indicate, I believe, that it is impossible to fill that void of the number of people we will need over the next 10 years from the existing South Australian population.

I believe that the Strategic Plan vision is for two million by 2050. On an average figure that requires an additional 10,000 per year. I understand that, in the last three years, that number has been met—and let us hope that it continues. Another interesting factor is the housing needs for population growth. I am advised that there are approximately 600,000 homes in South Australia (metropolitan and regionally). To accommodate two million people, instead of the 1.6 million (or a little less) that we have at the moment, it will require an additional 300,000 homes. That, in itself, will create an enormous amount of work and a need for materials.

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr GRIFFITHS: The target continues to grow. We are advised of that constantly. Housing numbers will be an important one, but it will put pressure upon the urban growth boundaries. I know that the government reviews that constantly and there have been some extensions to the northern and southern boundaries quite recently. However, as a regional member of this house, I would hope that it allows regional communities to also have a strong future.

Many people are leaving at the moment, which is very frustrating for me. Some are being drawn to the

opportunities in the north but others are leaving for employment opportunities where there are better rewards.

Debate adjourned.

[Sitting suspended from 13 : 00 to 14 : 00]