

North 'needs people'

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THE PM's proposal to ease congestion in cities by introducing a permanent migration cap will do little for regional communities who need the growth, say Far North industry leaders.

Enterprise North executive director Kevin Byrne said Prime Minister Scott Morrison's proposal to reduce the annual migration intake by 30,000 was a kneejerk response to planning failure in the metropolitan areas.

"We need to recognise



NUMBERS: Kevin Byrne wants a decade of growth.

that there are two economies out there ... one for the cities and the other for the regions

and they are poles apart," he said.

"Ours in the North are generally economies that are struggling to survive and which need an injection of people for a decade or more to grow the opportunities.

"We want to upsize our part of the world and we do that by growing our numbers and economic activity".

Centacare executive director Anita Viewers said Cairns has developed multicultural sectors through the diversity migration brings.

"Migration isn't going to stop, it's going to keep happening, and we need to do our

best to support a diverse community," she said.

"With skilled migrants, they arrive with the skills they need, they just need practical services to link up with employers.

"We also recognise the need for appropriate education access."

Mr Byrne said state and federal governments need to focus on making migration to regional centres more attractive.

He said a Designated Area Migration Agreement similar to the one adopted in the Northern Territory should be implemented to streamline

access for skilled migrant workers.

"What we suffer from is an inability of government and our political representatives to recognise the bigger issues that impact our growth, employment issues and all-round community prosperity and how to fix them," he said.

"The challenge for any federal and state government is to implement policies that make living in, and migrating to, the regions more attractive and you do that by offering a range of financial, employment and social incentives to achieve the end result."