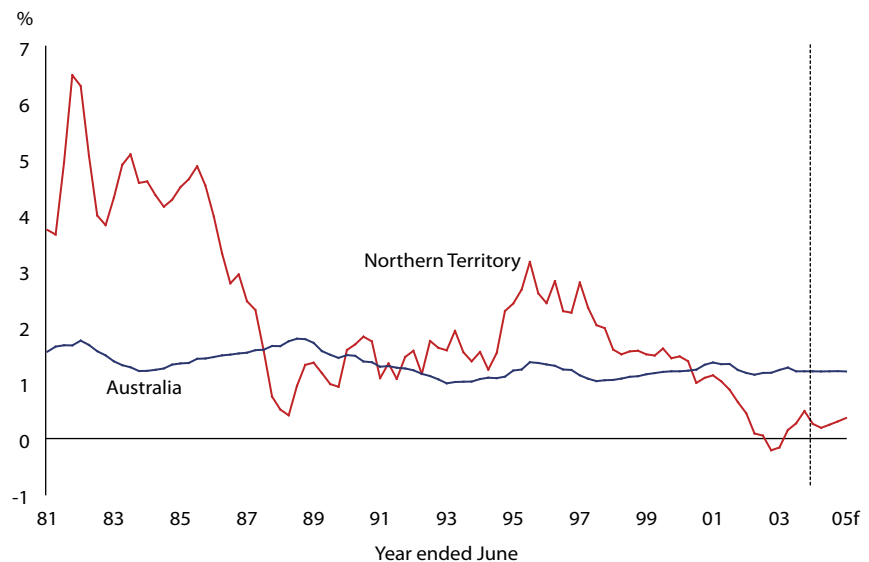


Population

- Population growth, through natural increase and both interstate and overseas migration, is a key driver of Territory economic growth.
- Despite significant net average annual migration outflows, the Territory has a recent history of strong population growth: 4 to 5 per cent annually in the early 1980s, 1 to 2 per cent in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and 2 per cent annually during the late 1990s.
- Completion of the main defence force build up in the Top End saw growth decline to 1.1 per cent in 2000-01 and 0.5 per cent in 2001-02.
- A net interstate migration outflow of 3 389 people, associated with weaker economic growth, was the major contributor to the 0.2 per cent population decline in 2002-03 to 198 351. Latest available data show an increase to 198 617 as at September 2003.
- Changes in interstate migration patterns in recent years indicate annual outflows have remained relatively stable at 17 000 to 18 000 but inflows have declined steadily since 1997 from a peak of over 18 000 to less than 15 000.
- Treasury estimates modest population growth of 0.3 per cent for 2003-04, and forecasts 0.3 per cent for 2004-05, and 0.5 per cent for both 2005-06 and 2006-07.
- As the Territory's population ages into the future, the proportion which is of working age (15-64 years) is likely to increase rather than decline, as is the situation in the rest of Australia.

Chart 2: Annual Population Growth Rates, Australia and the Northern Territory



f: forecast
Source: NT Treasury, ABS Cat. No. 3101.0