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MEDIA RELEASE

FRED NILE PRAYS FOR THE PEACE IN ARMENIA

For immediate circulation

During the Private Members Statements yesterday, Rev Hon Fred Nile MLC highlighted the ongoing plight of Christians in the current conflict in the Caucasus region. He also reflected on his own visit to the region on a Parliamentary Delegation some years ago. Below is an extract of Rev Nile's speech extracted from the Parliamentary *Hansard*.

Conflict in Armenia

Wednesday 14 October 2020

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE (14:46:22): I wish to say a few words on the conflict in Armenia, which is occurring even as I speak. The resurgence of conflict in the Caucasus in recent weeks and months is very sad. As my colleagues will be aware, I have always been a champion of the vulnerable in our society, including persecuted Christians abroad. Christians in New South Wales whose heritage can be traced to the Caucasus, the Pontian region and Middle East are part of my core constituency. I have spent a great deal of time with them. They have been in tremendous pain as their ancestral homelands continue to be submerged in war and strife; the recent reignition of war between Armenia and Azerbaijan is only the latest example.

According to a report by *First Things*, the conflict involves the Christian population of 150,000 who live inside the self-proclaimed Artsakh Republic, which is itself located in territory still recognised, unfortunately, as Azerbaijan by the international community. I pray with those Armenian Australians who may have family overseas and may be despairing for their safety. I remember my visit to the Artsakh Republic and Armenia with the official New South Wales parliamentary delegation led by the Premier, Gladys Berejiklian. The Premier's parents, who are Armenian, were in the delegation and travelled with us as well. We had a wonderful time. I had the privilege to address the Artsakh Republic Parliament, as did other members of the delegation.

I also pray for those of Azeri ancestry who have lost their loved ones. All life is sacred and war is a testimony to the failure of politics and diplomacy. When war breaks out it should be a profound embarrassment to the whole civilised world. According to a report published earlier this month by *Christianity Today*, 200 lives have been lost on the Armenian side but no clear number of losses have been published by Azari sources. A more recent report by the BBC has the figure of Armenian deaths at 300.

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