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MEDIA RELEASE

QUESTION TO THE GOVERNMENT:

IMPACT OF CORONA RESTRICTIONS ON RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY

For immediate circulation

On 20 October, Rev Hon Fred Nile MLC posed the following question to the government asking for statistical information concerning the impact of corona restrictions on religious activities. Below is an extract of Rev Nile's speech extracted from the Parliamentary *Hansard*.

COVID-19 AND RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE (16:20:02): My question without notice is addressed to the Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women, representing the Minister for Health, the Hon. Brad Hazzard, MP. Will the Minister provide the House with the following information: the number of applications that have been made by groups for them to be able to congregate in numbers larger than otherwise permitted under the existing coronavirus restrictions; the number of applications granted and declined; the kinds of groups these applicants were, namely, whether they were secular or religious and for the religious ones a denominational breakdown; and the reasons given for those that were declined?

The Hon. BRONNIE TAYLOR (Minister for Mental Health, Regional Youth and Women) (16:20:45): I thank the honourable member for his question, which is addressed to Minister Hazzard in the other place, whom I represent in this place. The question

contained quite a large amount of detail about particular groups of people and particular representations that have been made to the Minister for Health and I will need to take those parts of the question on notice. I take this opportunity to again congratulate the amazing work that our health services have done in this time of COVID.

We have seen lately very small amounts of community transmission and we have seen incredible contact tracing. How fantastic is the Service NSW contact tracing app? I commend the Parliament of New South Wales for taking on the Service NSW tracing app because it was a spectacular idea and it is fantastic not to have to re-enter our data all the time. We know how important contact tracing is. I have some recent coronavirus update data. The number of confirmed cases, including of interstate residents in New South Wales healthcare facilities, sits at 4,158, and over 2,917,454 tests have been carried out. That is a huge and phenomenal effort on behalf of the State of New South Wales by the people who are working within all aspects of the health industry in making sure that we have been able to give what is a world-class response to this virus.

It has been very good to note that some restrictions have been reduced so that we can get the economy moving and we can get people performing their jobs and doing the things that they need to do and, most importantly, people are able to interact again in a COVID-safe way. I congratulate my good friend and colleague the Hon. Sarah Mitchell because what the Department of Education has done for all of those students sitting their HSC today is tremendous and should be commended by everyone in this House. As I said, as the question contains a large amount of detail, I will take it on notice and get back to the honourable member as soon as possible.

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