



Trent Zimmerman MP

Member for North Sydney

Statement in the Parliament of Australia

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60th Anniversary of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Australia

Mr Deputy Speaker

I am fortunate to represent in this Parliament an electorate which is home to one of our nation's largest Australian-Armenian communities.

Those of Armenian heritage reflect all of the best features of our history of migration and multiculturalism.

While the first Armenians arrived during the gold rushes of the 19th Century, it was the post-World War II era – particularly the 1960s – which saw the largest influx of Armenian migrants, most of whom settled in Melbourne and Sydney.

Often arriving with little, Armenian migrants worked hard to establish themselves in a new land and succeeded with their commitment to family, enterprise and community. Be it in business, culture or public life, so many Australians of Armenian heritage have gone on to become leaders in our community.

For those of us in politics this is amply demonstrated by the example set by my predecessor, Joe Hockey, whose father was of Armenian stock and, of course, the leadership being provided to the people of NSW by a Premier with an unmistakably challenging Armenian surname, Gladys Berejiklian.

Part of the reason for the success of the Australian-Armenian community has been two traits deeply interwoven in the history of the Armenian people.

The first is resilience – born out of centuries of domination by its neighbours and the tragic attempt by the Ottoman empire to commit genocide against its Armenian population.

The second is the faith of Armenians in community, family and their church.

That faith is found in Armenian communities across Australia and today I want to acknowledge in this Parliament the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Australia.

It has a proud history and I know many in my local community will join together for the celebration events this year including a special concert being held in Chatswood in August.

The first Armenian Apostolic Church of Holy Resurrection was consecrated in Surry Hills in 1957. Nine years later, in 1966, the church was relocated to Chatswood in the municipality of Willoughby – which was fast becoming a focus for Armenians moving to Australia.

The church has had many fine leaders since its establishment. I particularly want to acknowledge the role of Archbishop Aghan BALIOZIAN who served the church in Australia from 1975 until his death in 2012.

I also acknowledge the leadership being provided by His Grace, Bishop NAJARIAN, who is serving his community with such distinction.

During its history in Australia, the church has met the spiritual needs of its adherents – its primary mission.

But it has also done more than that and has been a centre for maintaining the rich legacy of Armenian culture and is a symbol of national identity and language.

I know the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the Church in Australia is an important milestone for the Armenian community and I look forward to participating in some of the celebrations.

I am confident the Armenian Apostolic Church will continue to be a beacon of light in the lives of so many who have made Australia their home and those who understandably cherish their Armenian heritage.