MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW MOURNS COPTIC POPE SHENOUDA

Minister for Citizenship and Communities Victor Dominello has joined NSW Premier Barry O’Farrell in offering his deepest condolences to NSW’s Coptic communities following the death of his Holiness Pope Shenouda III, Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

Mr Dominello said the charismatic leader will be remembered as a champion of religious tolerance and peace.

“The passing of Pope Shenouda is a great loss for Egypt and for Coptic Christians the world over,” Mr Dominello said.

“As head of the Middle East’s largest Christian minority since 1971, Pope Shenouda was committed to Christian unity and to harmony with Egypt’s Muslim population.

“During four decades of leadership, he oversaw a significant expansion of his faith’s presence around the world, including Australia,” Mr Dominello said.

Up to 10 million Copts live in Egypt with an additional 2 million followers spread across the globe.

Mr Dominello praised the church’s contribution to multicultural life in NSW.

“The Coptic community established its roots in Australia in the 1960s, starting with just a handful of families,” he said.

“Today it has grown to encompass more than 40 churches, including 21 in NSW.

“From cultural celebrations to religious education and social outreach programs, the Coptic community in NSW has contributed in so many ways to our rich multicultural life.

“My deepest sympathies are with all Coptic Christians in this time of profound loss and mourning,” Mr Dominello said.