



Diocese of Sale

2025 Diocesan Assembly

Federation University Auditorium

Churchill, Victoria

14th and 15th February 2025



ASSEMBLY SUMMARY REPORT

March 2025

**Diocesan Consultation
and Assembly Prayer
2024-2025**

Holy Spirit of Wind and Fire, come!
Startle us anew with your power and energy.
Blow fresh life through our tired dreams.
Fan into a flame the gifts you have given us.
Light up the windows of our joy and purpose.
Spark bright fires of optimism deep within us.
Reveal more clearly a vision of what is possible.

May we listen attentively
to your quiet whisper at our very core.
May we discern your call
expressed in the voices and stories of others.
May we build a Church
that radiates and nourishes our unity of faith.
May we be at one with all of humanity
and the rest of God's creation.

May we develop the courage to be people of mission,
alert to opportunities,
always on the move,
bringing Good News to our needy world,
Wind and Fire for one another.
Amen.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Pray for Us.

*Composed by Michael Hansen
Traralgon, 2024*



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This 2025 Diocesan Assembly Summary Report provides a comprehensive overview of the 2025 Diocesan Assembly, held at Federation University Auditorium in Churchill, Victoria, on February 14–15, 2025. The Assembly brought together 220 delegates and participants, representing every Catholic parish, school, hospital, and aged care home, as well as major Diocesan bodies, organisations, and Ecumenical partners.

The primary focus of the assembly was to assess the strengths, challenges, and future pastoral priorities of the Diocese of Sale for the next five years (2026–2030).

This report primarily summarises delegates' feedback from table discussions held during the four working sessions. In compiling these responses, we have sought to faithfully capture the essence and spirit of their contributions.

At its core, the Post-Assembly Summary Report reaffirms the Diocese of Sale's commitment to a Christ-centred, synodal, and mission-driven future. Key pastoral priorities identified include:

- youth engagement*
- faith formation*
- strengthening parish-school collaboration*
- fostering a culture of listening and inclusion*
- renewing evangelisation efforts*

The report also acknowledges significant challenges, such as declining Church membership, generational gaps, and the sustainability of clergy leadership. At the same time, it underscores the need to embrace digital engagement, social outreach, and environmental stewardship as vital elements of future ministry.

In their message to Bishop Greg and the Diocesan Mission Council, delegates expressed deep gratitude for the opportunity to listen, collaborate, and discern the future direction of the Diocese. They called for bold and decisive action, urging the Diocese to translate these discussions into a strategic pastoral plan that revitalises faith communities and strengthens their common mission.

The report also recognizes with appreciation the teams and individuals who contributed to the success of the Assembly.

Delegate evaluations reflected positive feedback on the Assembly's organisation, facilitation, and engagement process. Additionally, participants suggested areas for improvement, particularly in music, communication, and youth involvement.



2025 DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY GOALS



GENERAL GOAL

The goal of the 2025 Diocesan Assembly was to bring together a broad and representative group of people from the Catholic Diocese of Sale, alongside our ecumenical partners, to listen deeply to one another, and discern, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, how our Diocese can become a more Christ-centred, synodal, and missionary Church.

WORKING GOALS

The Diocesan Assembly process working goals are:

- a. To acknowledge and affirm the strengths and best practices of our Diocese that we wish to continue to build on.
- b. To identify the significant challenges faced by people in our Diocese as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ.
- c. To gain a clear picture of which pastoral goals and actions need to be given priority over the next five years, for our Diocese to develop towards becoming more Christ-centred, synodal, and missionary.

ASSEMBLY TABLE GROUPS

Table Groups were a central part of the whole Assembly discernment process. The table groups aimed to foster trust, respect, and open dialogue. Each table consisted of up to eight delegates, which made a total of 27 Table Groups.

All discussions and spiritual conversations took place in the Federation University Auditorium. Each group had a designated Table Facilitator and Table Scribe. Laptops were provided at each table. The Table Scribes used session forms provided on the laptop to record individual and group responses to guided questions.

The Role of the Table Facilitator:

- a. To endeavour to create and develop a safe, harmonious, and relaxed spirit among table group members.
- b. To monitor the health and well-being of group members.
- c. To lead the dialogue and spiritual conversations according to the process detailed in the handbook.
- d. Where possible, to keep to the time allotments listed for each activity.
- e. To encourage each person to use their opportunity to share their responses to the questions asked.
- f. To discourage people who try to dominate by taking more than their allotted time.
- g. At the appropriate time, to respectfully challenge the behaviours of those individuals who are not following the Principles of Engagement or Ground Rules outlined in the Assembly Working Document.
- h. To work collaboratively with the Table Scribe to ensure the responses to relevant questions are recorded.
- i. To inform the Assembly Facilitator if any issues, concerns or questions arise out of the table group experience.

The Role of the Table Scribe:

- a. To check off Table Group members at the beginning of each day.
- b. To use the laptop provided to type into the relevant Google Form for each session, the essence of responses made by group members in response to the conversation questions.
- c. To ensure the laptop is charged at major breaks.
- d. To alert the Floor Management Team of any issues e.g. medical emergency experienced by people at the table.
- e. To assist with a roll call if an emergency evacuation was to occur.

TIMETABLE and PROGRAM



Friday, 14th February 2025 – DAY ONE

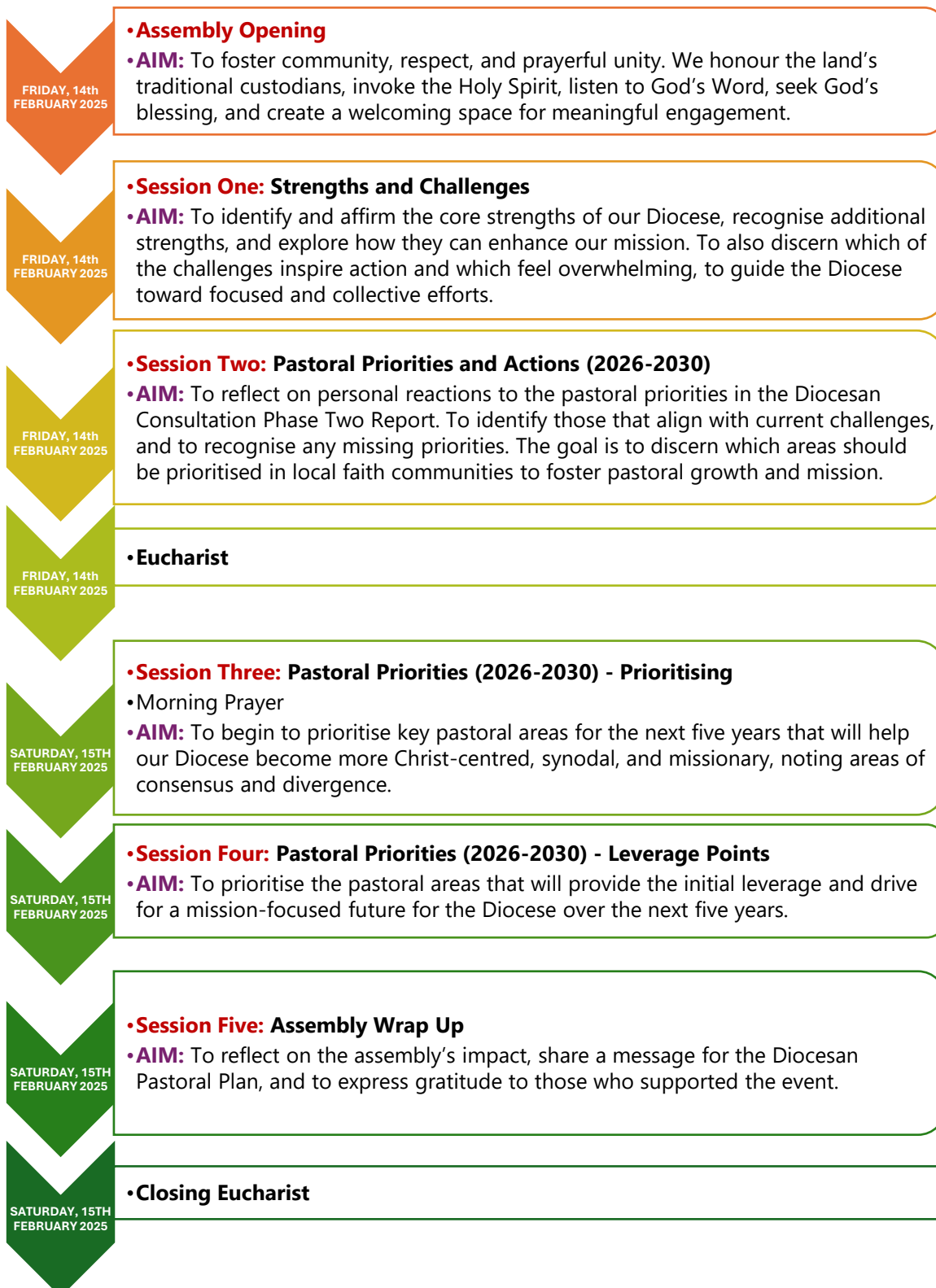
9.30 am:	Arrival: Finding table seating; Morning tea
10.30 am	Brief welcome
	Emergency procedures briefing
10.45 am	Welcome to Country
10.50 am	Assembly Opening Liturgy
11.45 pm	Table Introductions
12.10 pm	General introduction and assembly overview
12.30 pm:	LUNCH
1.15 pm:	Session One: OUR STRENGTHS and CHALLENGES
2.45 pm:	AFTERNOON TEA
3.15 pm:	Session Two: PASTORAL PRIORITIES and ACTIONS – CONSULTATION REPORT
4.45 pm:	Break and Travel to Lumen Christi Church
5.15 pm	Eucharist – Lumen Christi Church, Churchill
6.00 pm:	Travel back to Fed Uni
6.15 pm:	DINNER
8.00 pm	Day close

Saturday, 15th February 2025 – DAY TWO

9.00 am:	Arrival
9.30 am:	Morning Prayer
10.00 am:	Session Three: PASTORAL PRIORITIES – PRIORITISING A
11.30 am:	MORNING TEA
12.00 pm:	Session Four: PASTORAL PRIORITIES – PRIORITISING B
1.00 pm:	LUNCH
1.45 pm:	Session Five: ASSEMBLY WRAP UP
3.30 pm	AFTERNOON TEA
	Travel from Federation University to Lumen Christi Church
4.00 pm	Eucharist- Lumen Christi Catholic Church, Churchill
5.00 pm:	Departure

DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY PROCESS

SESSION AIMS





**Opening Address given at
the Diocesan Assembly Federation University
14 February 2025
Bishop Greg Bennet**

Holy Spirit of Wind and Fire, Come!

In the Book of Exodus (Ex 3:1-14) Moses is tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, at Mount Horeb. Suddenly the angel of the Lord appears in flames of fire from within a bush which does not burn up. The inquisitive Moses approaches the bush: "I will go over and see this strange sight and why the bush does not burn up" (Ex 3:3). The Lord sees him approach and calls to him, "Moses, Moses!" As we read so often in scripture when our ancestors hear a call from God, Moses responds, "Here, I am."

God then cautions him not to come any closer. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Then the Lord said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." At this, we are told, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God (Ex:3:5).

My dear sisters and brothers, in your own ways you have answered God's invitation with your own, 'here I am.' You have been called from your parishes and ministries to be part of this Assembly. The holy grounds of our Diocese are rich and varied – from the growth corridors in the West and our regional cities and country towns – the strengths are great and the challenges diverse.

We gather from the four winds of the Diocese. We come before the God of wind and fire. We come before the burning bush to encounter the Holy One whose promise is fulfilled in Jesus Christ in whom we find our stories, our church, our mission.

We bring the hopes of our communities to this sacred assembly. We are blessed by those who have come to walk with us and to share this time: Ecumenical friends, Special Observers, leadership from St John of God, Catholic Care, St Vincent de Paul and various organizations who promote, support, and sustain so many people – Catholic and non-Catholic alike.

This is our invitation – to "take off our shoes" before the presence of the God who gathers us here and in the presence of one another, for this is our holy ground.

Holy Spirit of Wind and Fire, come! Blow fresh life through our tired dreams.

We gather with the universal Church and in union with Francis our Pope. This assembly also unites us with the Church across our Province, and Australia.

We are not alone: We are accompanied by the countless saintly women and men, and children

whose powerful witness points us to Jesus Christ. We draw from our Tradition and the “sure compass” (NMI) of the Constitutions of the Second Vatican Council, magisterial teaching, doctrine, and the lived voices of the *sensus fidei*. We allow the Living Word to be spoken in our hearts and to interpret our experience. We come to honour our history: In the words of Saint John XXIII, “history is the teacher of life.”

We draw from a rich theological tradition – it provides vast parameters for our creative imagining. The holy ground of Tradition and Scripture serves to shape the work of the Assembly process and paves the way for our creative imagining in our deep listening, discernment and decision making.

Thomas Merton wrote that ‘Pilgrimage is a way of opening ourselves to the mystery of life’. Over these two years of extensive and intensive consultation, the people of the Diocese of Sale have undertaken a pilgrimage. The mystery we have been pondering is about how we are to live as people of mission in our place and our time. In a “change of era” (Pope Francis) how are we to be credible disciples in amidst changing secular context and even a post-Christian society?

You and many others have gathered to faithfully engage with the process which has led us here. Some of our pilgrims prayed alone and submitted their responses. We have attempted to listen to the voices of those who are beyond the walls of our parish communities, and especially those on the peripheries, who for a variety of reasons, believe they cannot belong among us, or worst still, are not welcomed by us. How do we open the doors to them? As Pope Francis says, the church belongs to Christ and Christ belongs to everyone.

Holy Spirit of wind and fire, come! Reveal more clearly a vision of what is possible.

As bishop, I must also acknowledge the terrible crimes committed by clergy and religious and a few lay people in our diocese, whose evil actions have profoundly wounded the lives of innocent young children, and by doing so, destroyed the fabric of unity among families, communities and friends. Relationships have been fractured by the silence and decisions which caused such harm and trauma. I say again, how sorrowful I am for the suffering of victim survivors and those they love. This was not the fault of lay women and men. The responsibility lies in a culture which enabled clericalism to flourish, unaccountability to manifest and opaque decision-making to dictate such poor pastoral response. For many, these things were hidden, not acknowledged, and were kept in darkness. This cannot be the case any longer. We must use the avenues which enable genuine healing and reparation to those so affected by abuse. We must never be complacent about the safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults. Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility. We will continue to build a culture of safeguarding wherever we are present across the beautiful Diocese of Sale, so all in our care, all we encounter and all to whom we witness may be safe. Last year’s Safeguarding Audit by external auditors affirmed our compliance and the initiatives which have been taken. We commit to the ongoing work of building a culture characterized by transparency and robust safeguarding practices.

As people of the Kingdom of God, we express mercy, compassion and justice. We know of our need to continue to walk with our Indigenous people and to seek ways which will enable reconciliation and healing. To be the Church which we are called to be.

We think of others so often forgotten who have no-one to speak for them: prisoners, refugees, asylum seekers, homeless poor. Those whose cries of suffering in body, mind or spirit rarely attract our notice. There are current issues too in our land which fracture unity among Christians, and other Abrahamic faiths - Jews and Muslims; expressions of hatred which create fear, must end! In a time of so many wars and fractious peace, we must pray and witness to the Prince of Peace.

Holy Spirit of Wind and Fire, come! Startle us anew with your power and energy!

The two phases of our Consultation process did the following:

The first phase invited us to look back since we last gathered in Assembly in 2019 and trace the ways we had responded to what had emerged, and to see how the Holy Spirit had accompanied us on our journey. The first phase report highlighted the initiatives and strengths, and resilience of our people deeply connected to their communities and living their baptismal priesthood.

Phase two pushed us to look forward to the next five years. The second phase report tells us what participants valued in their parishes and the diocese. It gave voice to their ascending Christian hopes for the next five years. The strengths and challenges are often nuance. They echo in a pre-emptive way this year of Jubilee – to be Pilgrims of Hope. Pope Francis says: *Hope does not disappoint us; our hope has a name: the name of Jesus.*

One of the joys of being a bishop is the opportunity I have to encounter so many extraordinary, wonderful people – the beatitude people- across our parish communities, schools and colleges and Catholic institutions (St John of God, Villa Maria Catholic Homes, Catholic Care Victoria). I am humbled by your ministries - people involved in prison ministry, aged- care chaplaincy, St Vincent de Paul Society, parish-based programs like Mick's Kitchen-Traralgon, Paddy's Kitchen Pakenham, other groups working together like Frankies in Warragul, Catholic Women's League, prayer groups, and in so many extraordinary and creative ways. These are the places where we encounter the angels without knowing it (c.f. Hb 13:2). This is mission made visible within our communities and to the peripheries. This is a profound witness to hope.

Holy Spirit of Wind and Fire, come! May we build a Church that radiates and nourishes our unity of faith.

Ten years following the second Vatican Council Saint Paul VI issued an encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi* in which he proposed that our Christian witness evokes irresistible questions in the lives of others, provoking them to ask: *Why are they like this? Why do they live in this way? What or who is it that inspires them? Why are they in our midst?* (n. 21) In other words, people read the gospel in the lives of the followers of Christ, and it is this witness which is transformative. The profound gift of our anointing at Baptism is that it makes us all sharers in Christ's prophetic and priestly life.

For many, our discernment raised the natural concern about young people and their engagement. There are wonderful shoots of life to witness: the strength of youth ministry in some parishes is refreshing to see and experience. There have been intentional efforts by many to really encourage, welcome and support young people to find their place in our midst. The J Walkers of Traralgon, the young people in the LAMP project in our larger urban parishes, the experience of World Youth Day for some, Jesus Youth, experiences such as Ignite ministry, and later this year, Australian Catholic Youth Festival. There are many efforts in our parishes walking with younger students and connecting them to parish.

Each year, I have the joy to engage with our college leaders and captains – the best advertisements of our colleges. I am inspired by their Christian witness and leadership. I see in them such optimism and openness to others and to the world.

In the Rule of St Benedict, it is written, that it is often the youngest in the community to whom the Lord reveals new and better solutions (Rule 3:3). So, we look forward to the contribution of the young people amongst us.

Holy Spirit of Wind and Fire, come! May we develop the courage to be people of mission

As we gather in this sacred assembly, we do so in a spirit of co- responsibility. You will have read Father Orm Rush's fine and synthetic paper in our working document. Father Orm says the best

definition of synodality is the Vatican Council II. The mission of the Church is the same as that of Jesus (DV 8). Our capacity to read the 'signs of the times' through the Holy Spirit flows, from the particular charisms and gifts of the Church: lay, religious, ordained, all the baptised are called to be engaged in the inner life and outer mission of the Church in the world...all are called to work together – in co-responsibility – in order to carry out the mission of the Church in the world (O Rush, AWD, pg5)

At this assembly, all of us around these tables, we gather to share how we believe the Spirit is leading us. We gather to deeply listen to how other's united in the same Spirit can enrich our dialogue, open us to new possibilities and bring something new to life.

I am the most blessed Bishop in the land! I say this because I have discovered in the presbyterate of Sale (bishop, priest, deacons) such unity of purpose, care, and mission. We are not perfect, of course, but we share the mission of Jesus' sacramental ministry in ways which unite us. We are the youngest group of clergy in Australia, we are diverse, representing different countries of birth, experiences of formation and education. I know of the support and connection our priests and deacons share with you. I know of their efforts to walk closely with you in sharing your joys, sorrows, anxieties and hopes. As clergy, we must continue to learn and grow in living and exercising ministry co-responsibility. We too commit ourselves to our ongoing formation in service of the Lord and you.

Throughout the two reports there are references to Catholic Education. I am pleased that we have provided opportunities for clergy, principals, and religious education leaders to gather and discuss the ways this partnership could be strengthened. It is clear that we all wish to have a Catholic education system which inspires young people in a Christian vision which elevates them to achieve their best. Our schools are governed by the Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Board and is led by Mr. Paul Velten, Chief Executive Officer – these fine people are with us. Our governance framework focusses upon both the compliance and the management of the business; however, this is always through a mission perspective of Catholic Education.

Holy Spirit of Wind and Fire, come! May we develop the courage to be people of mission, alert to new opportunities, always on the move!

Over the next two days you will meet some of the people who collaborate closely with me in the administration, pastoral life and mission, safeguarding and other ministries of support. The work of this assembly will assist us in shaping our response to what we are invited to adopt and consider.

There is so much more which could be said, but now I shall allow each of you, with me, to allow the imagination of the Holy Spirit to inspire us.

Recently, I stood at the lookout at Mallacoota (Parish of Orbost), I saw the beauty of the place where the river meets the sea. The confluence of the waters which have flowed from the snow fields meets the ocean – just extraordinarily majestic. The "river" of the past two years, and all that has gone before, now arrives to this time and place where God will be with us. We stand on a holy ground. We stand before one another. We stand before this synodal moment in the history of the Diocese of Sale, to see where the Spirit leads us in the next five years in our renewal and our shared mission.

The Lord now sees us approaching and calls us by name to be here in this place. All we need to say, is "Here, I am Lord" and God will say in response, "be not afraid."

Our Lady of Perpetual Help, pray for us!



FRIDAY, 14TH FEBRUARY 2025



SESSION ONE: STRENGTHS

SESSION AIM:

To identify and affirm the core strengths of our Diocese, recognise additional strengths, and explore how they can enhance our mission.

From the Consultation Phase Two Report:

*What are the **GREATEST STRENGTHS** that our people, parish communities, and the Diocese of Sale, should continue to build on?*

1. *Strong sense of Community and Inclusivity*
2. *Commitment to Faith and Spiritual Life*
3. *Valuing and Preserving our Tradition*
4. *Excellence in Catholic Education and Potential of Young People*
5. *Social Outreach and Service*
6. *Gift of our Diversity and Cultural Strengths*
7. *Strength of Leadership and Vision*

FOCUS QUESTION:

1.1 What are the GREATEST STRENGTHS that our people, parish communities, and the Diocese of Sale, want to continue to build on?

1. Excellence in Catholic Education

Many groups see Catholic education as a cornerstone of the Diocese's mission. Our schools are not only as places of academic learning, but also as vital spaces where faith is nurtured, and social justice is promoted. Groups repeatedly mention "excellence in Catholic education" and highlight the potential of young people. Schools are viewed as integral in connecting students to both the liturgical life and the broader values of the faith.

2. Community and Inclusivity

There is a strong sense of community across parishes and schools, with an emphasis on creating welcoming and inclusive environments. Many groups referenced a warm, "family-like" atmosphere and a deliberate effort to include diverse groups. This inclusivity extends not just to cultural diversity but also to marginalised individuals, reflecting the Church's commitment to living out Catholic Social Teaching.

3. Leadership and Vision

Leadership emerges as a recurring theme, with a particular focus on the positive impact of strong, accessible figures such as Bishop Greg, and dedicated clergy and lay leaders in parishes and schools. Groups referenced that they valued clear vision and leadership that "walks the talk." There's recognition of both clerical and lay leadership as key

drivers for the community's spiritual and social well-being. Some also suggested the need to further empower women and lay leaders.

4. Social Outreach and Service

Social outreach is consistently highlighted as a vital strength. Responses indicate a robust commitment to volunteerism and community service. Initiatives such as food outreach, support for the poor, and partnerships with local service organisations (e.g., Vinnies, soup kitchens) are frequently mentioned as ways the Church lives out its mission in times of economic and social challenges.

5. Tradition, Faith, and Adaptability

The preservation of tradition and commitment to faith are central to the community's identity. At the same time, there's an awareness of the need to adapt traditional practices to contemporary contexts. While many responses celebrate traditional liturgy, sacramental practices, and devotions, some also note efforts to recontextualise religious education and worship—highlighting the importance of striking a balance between honouring heritage and embracing change.

6. Celebrating Diversity

Diversity—both cultural and generational—is seen as a strength that enriches the Diocese. There's frequent mention of how diverse backgrounds contribute to a dynamic and vibrant community. This diversity is not only celebrated for its cultural value but also recognised as a challenge to ensure that all voices are integrated into the life of the Church.

7. Resilience and Adaptability in Times of Adversity

Responses also highlight the community's remarkable resilience and adaptability in the face of change and adversity, including natural disasters, death, and loss. Many participants noted that, despite challenging circumstances such as natural disasters or personal loss, the community consistently comes together to support one another. This resilience not only underscores the strength of faith and communal ties, but also the ability to adapt and continue forward, ensuring that the mission and values remain intact even during tough times.

Overall Summary

The Table Group feedback paints a picture of a Diocese that is deeply rooted in tradition while actively evolving to meet contemporary challenges. The strengths in Catholic education, community spirit, strong leadership, social outreach, and the ability to adapt during adversity are evident. At the same time, the evolving dynamics around secularism, inclusivity, and leadership diversity indicate areas where the community is already thinking about—and working on—further development.

FOCUS QUESTION:

1.2 Which STRENGTHS ARE NOT LISTED yet need to be recognised?

WE NEED TO RECOGNISE:

1. Diversity, Inclusion and Interfaith Engagement:

- the contributions of individuals and families arriving from diverse countries and faith backgrounds—including recent arrivals—who bring joy, vibrancy, and a fresh perspective to our Church.
- our commitment to respectful engagement with Indigenous peoples, acknowledging both their long history in our Diocese and the ongoing need for healing and reconciliation.
- our commitment to interfaith dialogue that enriches our community and fosters mutual understanding.

2. Volunteerism and Lay Leadership

- the dedicated work of our volunteers—often described as an “army of mostly women”—and affirm the significant role that lay persons play in supporting the clergy and the life of our parishes.
- the hard work and commitment of Parish staff and volunteers whose contributions keep our communities strong and vibrant.
- the large pool of talent and gifts that exists among the people of the Diocese of Sale.

3. Resilience and Adaptability

- the resilience of our clergy and lay leaders as they adapt to changing circumstances and navigate complex pastoral challenges using innovative, modern communication strategies.
- the enduring strength of our Church communities in overcoming adversity and remaining steadfast in their mission.

4. Partnership Between Parishes and Schools

- the strong, mutually enriching partnership between our parishes and Catholic schools, which fosters faith formation, reinforces community identity, and builds shared values in education.
- the increasing number of non-Catholic parents choosing Catholic education for their children, affirming the distinct appeal and quality of our schools.

5. Community, Identity and Heritage

- the importance of building a strong, inclusive Catholic identity that celebrates our rich heritage while embracing the contributions of both young and old.
- the achievements and good works of individuals and communities throughout the Diocese, reinforcing and celebrating our collective history and sense of belonging.

6. Leadership, Wisdom and Pastoral Care

- the openness, humility, and listening nature of our parish leadership, which sets a positive tone for community engagement and pastoral care.

- the wisdom of our senior Catholics as a valuable resource and affirm the importance of ongoing pastoral training that prepares our leaders to address contemporary challenges, including safeguarding and family violence.
- 7. Spirituality and Liturgy**
- the central role of liturgical practices, the joy of the Eucharist, and the high quality of our sacramental programs in nurturing the spiritual life of our communities.
 - that our spiritual practices provide a vital foundation for community unity and individual devotion.
- 8. Effective Use of Resources and Communication**
- the potential of modern communication tools—including social media and digital strategies—to engage youth and families, share resources, and foster synergy among parishes.
 - the importance of effectively utilising our resources to remain connected and relevant in today's rapidly changing world.
- 9. Social Justice and Catholic Social Teaching**
- the imperative to live out the principles of Catholic Social Teaching by actively safeguarding our communities and addressing social issues such as family and domestic violence.
 - that promoting healing, forgiveness, and justice is integral to our mission as a compassionate Church.
- 10. Family and Youth Engagement**
- the vital contributions of young families and children in energising parish life and ensuring their voices and dreams are heard and valued.
 - the importance of creating opportunities that nurture the aspirations and leadership potential of our youth.
- 11. Environmental Stewardship and Connection to Land**
- the strong connection to the land that characterises the rural identity of our Diocese—particularly in regions like Gippsland—and the value of integrating ecological stewardship into our parish and diocesan life.
 - the importance of fostering a sense of responsibility toward the natural world as part of our overall faith and community identity.
- 12. Collaborative Ministry and Community Engagement**
- the strength of collaborative partnerships between parishes—such as youth ministry initiatives like LAMP—that promote shared resources and community engagement.
 - the robustness of our ecumenical relationships, and the strength of faith found in small, isolated parish communities, ensuring that every voice and contribution is valued.

FOCUS QUESTION:

1.3 What opportunities do our strengths offer to further develop the life and mission of our Diocese?

1. Enhancing Inclusivity and Welcoming Communities

- **Invitation and Hospitality:** A recurring theme is the need to “invite people in” more creatively. Our welcoming spirit can be formalised into programs that ensure every visitor feels embraced and valued, whether through physical gatherings or digital interactions.
- **Interfaith and Cultural Openness:** With diversity noted in age, culture, and faith backgrounds, there’s an opportunity to craft initiatives that celebrate this mix. This can involve collaborative events with other faith communities and culturally tailored outreach programs.

2. Empowering Lay and Diverse Leadership

- **Shared Responsibility:** By further empowering lay leaders—including women and youth—we can tap into a broader range of talents and perspectives. This not only enriches our decision-making but also fosters a sense of shared mission.
- **Mentorship and Role Models:** Encouraging leaders who serve as role models can help bridge generational gaps and nurture the next wave of Church leadership.

3. Strengthening Collaboration and Communication

- **Parish and School Partnerships:** The feedback underscores the benefits of closer collaboration between parishes and schools. By sharing resources, best practices, and even coordinating sacramental programs, we can create a more cohesive Diocese.
- **Diocesan Platforms:** Reviving or introducing communication tools (like an online “Catholic Life” publication) could help disseminate ‘good news’ stories, encourage cross-parish support, and keep the community informed about ongoing initiatives.

4. Leveraging Digital Engagement

- **Online Liturgy and Outreach:** The use of digital platforms for accessing liturgy and Church teachings is seen as a vital tool—especially for youth and those unable to attend in person. Enhancing our digital presence can make our services more accessible and engaging.
- **Social Media and Virtual Community Building:** Expanding our online engagement can provide a space for sharing faith, celebrating cultural diversity, and creating a virtual community that mirrors the warmth of our in-person gatherings.

5. Innovating Faith Formation and Education

- **Recontextualising the Gospel:** There’s a clear call for making faith more tangible and relevant—whether in school settings, among youth or in adult faith formation. This approach will need to involve creative, inquiry-based methods to teach faith, scripture, spirituality, prayer and instil faith in a way that resonates with present day students.

- **Cross-Generational Learning:** Strengthening programs that connect the spiritual insights of older parishioners with the fresh perspectives of young people can create a dynamic learning environment that benefits all.

6. Expanding Social Outreach and Mission Work

- **Community Service Initiatives:** Our strengths in faith and cultural diversity can be harnessed to develop robust social outreach projects. These could include initiatives around Catholic social justice, support for the elderly, or volunteer programs that engage both youth and adults.
- **Partnerships Beyond Our Walls:** There's potential in forming alliances with other community organisations or even other denominations to address wider societal challenges, thereby living out our mission in tangible ways.

In Summary

The diverse strengths noted—from a vibrant welcoming spirit and inclusive approach to innovative digital strategies and strong inter-parish ties—present us with a solid foundation to reimagine and expand our mission. By embracing these opportunities, our Diocese can nurture deeper faith, foster collaborative leadership and, ultimately, extend our reach to positively impact both our community and the broader society.



Bush Tucker by Louise Numina Napanangka – Utopia Region, N.T., Australia

FRIDAY, 14TH FEBRUARY 2025



SESSION ONE: CHALLENGES

SESSION AIM:

To discern which of the challenges inspire action and which feel overwhelming, to guide the Diocese toward focused and collective efforts.

From the Consultation Phase Two Report:

*As we look to the future, what are the **GREATEST CHALLENGES** we now face as people of faith, as parish communities, and as a Diocese?*

- 1. Overcoming Generational and Cultural Gaps to Engage Youth in an Aging Population*
- 2. Reversing Declining Church Membership: Tackling Loneliness, Building Community, and Embracing Cultural Diversity*
- 3. Addressing Gaps in Spiritual Formation: Bridging Catholic Identity, Tradition, and Modern Expectations to Reignite Evangelization*
- 4. Securing the Future of Church Leadership: Sustaining Clergy, Lay Formation, and Women's Evolving Role*
- 5. Strengthening Parish-School Partnerships and Sustaining Educational Excellence*
- 6. Managing Financial Challenges and Measuring Impact Effectively*
- 7. Enhancing Communication Strategies to Bridge the Technological Divide*

FOCUS QUESTION:

1.4 Which of the challenges do we have passion and energy to do something about? Which of the challenges do we find too overwhelming or too difficult to know what to do?

Overview

Reflections reveal two broad clusters of challenges. On one hand, there is significant energy and passion to engage in initiatives that foster connection, formation, and outreach. On the other hand, certain challenges are perceived as being too overwhelming or complex to address immediately. Below is a synthesis of these views.

The Challenges We're Energised to Do Something About

- **Spiritual Formation and Catholic Identity:**
Many are committed to deepening faith through better catechesis, engaging both adults and youth in a journey of spiritual formation, and bridging the gaps between traditional teachings and contemporary life.

- **Parish–School Partnerships and Intergenerational Engagement:**
There is strong enthusiasm for strengthening connections between parishes and Catholic schools. This includes leveraging the talent of both older and younger generations, to create an intergenerational Church that balances tradition with modern cultural perspectives.
- **Youth Engagement:**
Despite some logistical concerns, there exists a significant drive to try and address youth disengagement—utilising modern communication, technology, and innovative outreach, to make the Church more accessible and relevant to younger people.
- **Empowering Lay Leadership:**
Recognising much fewer people are answering the call to priesthood, many see this as an opportunity to focus attention and resources in training and empowering lay leaders (including exploring new roles for women) to share the workload, and to bring fresh perspectives to Church leadership.
- **Effective Communication and Outreach:**
There is a shared passion for improving how we communicate internally and externally using contemporary methods, and digital platforms, to better connect with diverse groups and to reach out beyond our immediate community.

The Challenges We Viewed as Overwhelming or Too Difficult:

- **Vocations Crisis and Sustaining Clergy:**
The shortage of Priests and vowed Religious, along with questions around sustaining future leadership, is seen as a daunting and complex issue.
- **Financial and Resource Limitations:**
Declining Church membership and the consequent financial challenges—such as maintenance, insurance, and overall parish viability—are consistently cited as barriers that feel overwhelming.
- **Leadership Hierarchies and Structural Inertia:**
Issues related to entrenched Church leadership and the resistance to change (both among clergy and parishioners) make it difficult to navigate necessary reforms, including clarifying and expanding the role of women in leadership.
- **Balancing Tradition with Contemporary Expectations:**
While there is the energy to modernise and innovate, the tension between maintaining long-held traditions and adapting to current cultural and societal contexts is a major challenge that many find too complex to resolve quickly.
- **Technological and Communication Gaps:**
Although there is a drive to harness modern communication tools, bridging the technological divide—especially among older members—remains a significant hurdle.

Conclusion

In summary, delegates were generally passionate about initiatives that enhance spiritual formation, foster intergenerational and parish–school connections, engage youth, and empower lay leadership through improved communication and outreach. Conversely, the challenges around sustaining clergy, managing financial constraints, overcoming entrenched leadership structures, and balancing tradition with contemporary demands are seen as particularly overwhelming and difficult to address.

FRIDAY, 14TH FEBRUARY 2025

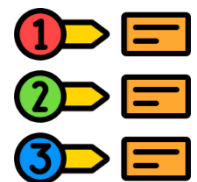
SESSION TWO: Pastoral Priorities and Actions (2026-2030)

SESSION AIM:

To reflect on personal reactions to the pastoral priorities in the Diocesan Consultation Phase Two Report. To identify those pastoral priorities that align with current challenges, and to recognise any missing priorities. The goal is to discern which pastoral areas should be prioritised in local faith communities to foster pastoral growth and mission.

From the Consultation Phase Two Report:

*What **PASTORAL PRIORITIES and ACTIONS** is the Holy Spirit calling us, as individuals, and as faith communities to focus on during the next five years, to give renewed life and purpose to our shared mission?*



1. *Engaging Youth and Nurturing the Future Church*
2. *Building Stronger Parish-School Collaboration and Partnership*
3. *Strengthening Community Bonds*
4. *Fostering a Culture of Listening and Inclusion*
5. *Promoting Healing, Building Trust and Strengthening Relationships*
6. *Cultivating Spiritual Growth*
7. *Renewing Evangelization Efforts*
8. *Developing Leadership and Faith Formation Programs*
9. *Enhancing Liturgy, Worship and Prayer Experiences*
10. *Fostering Communication and Engagement Through Technology*
11. *Faith and Justice Integration and Collaborative Outreach to Marginalized Groups*
12. *Caring for Creation and Developing Ecological Stewardship*

FOCUS QUESTION:

2.1 Which pastoral priorities are MISSING from the Consultation Phase Two Report that need to be considered in the Diocesan Pastoral Plan?

1. Clergy, Vocations, and Leadership

- **Clergy Support and Wellbeing:**
 - Missing emphasis on the wellbeing of clergy and addressing clergy shortages.
- **Vocation Promotion:**
 - Insufficient attention to nurturing vocations through initiatives such as the permanent diaconate, adult servers, acolytes (including women acolytes), and improved pathways for young seminarians.
- **Parish Leadership:**
 - Need for stronger lay leadership and support structures (e.g., supervision for parish staff, forming strong co-responsibility among parish leaders).

2. Youth Ministry and Engagement

- **Youth Involvement and Voice:**

- A recurring call for youth agency through dedicated youth councils, assemblies, and programs that incorporate contemporary communication methods.

- **Faith Formation and Engagement:**

- Gaps in programs that connect youth with faith formation, including innovative approaches beyond traditional Eucharistic gatherings and integrating youth perspectives in ministry planning.

3. Pastoral Support and Evangelisation

- **Evangelisation Initiatives:**

- The need for clearer, more joyful language and approaches that share the relevance and positivity of the Gospel.

- **Re-Engagement and Outreach:**

- Strategies to reconnect with lapsed members, marginalised groups (such as divorced individuals, same-sex couples, bereaved families), and children in non-Catholic schools are seen as underdeveloped.

- **Practical Pastoral Actions:**

- A call for practical pastoral initiatives that are already happening at the parish level to be recognised and built upon.

4. Financial Sustainability and Administration

- **Long-Term Financial Planning:**

- Concerns over fundraising, budgeting practices, and the financial support of smaller or poorer parishes, ensuring long-term sustainability without overburdening parish priests.

- **Resource Utilisation:**

- Beyond monetary aspects, there's a missed opportunity to harness the "powerful resource" of people and their talents.

5. Communication, Collaboration, and Partnerships

- **Inter-Diocesan and Ecumenical Partnerships:**

- To further explore the potential for national and international partnerships to share best practices, skills, and successful models.

- **Enhanced Communication:**

- Better on-going dialogue is needed between Dioceses and between Parishes.
- Communication can also be enhanced through mechanisms such as surveys and dialogue groups.

6. Volunteer Care and Lay Involvement

- **Valuing Volunteers:**

- There's a call to recognise and streamline the role of volunteers, including refining requirements (e.g., for safeguarding) and appreciating the diverse gifts they bring to the ministry.

- **Expanding Lay Roles:**
 - More support for developing lay ministry roles and creating opportunities for lay people to contribute effectively to pastoral work.

7. **Formation, Education, and Liturgical Clarity**

- **Faith Formation Programs:**
 - Developing initiatives to enhance faith formation across all ages through collaborative projects between schools and parishes, and by engaging resource personnel (e.g. liturgists, musicians, scripture scholars, etc.).
- **Cultural and Educational Clarity:**
 - A need for clearer liturgical explanations (e.g. the parts of the Mass) and for integrating faith teaching into real-world contexts (for example, addressing anxiety or linking faith with wellbeing practices).
- **Role of Women and Educators:**
 - Giving greater focus on the role of women in the Church, and on teachers acting as witnesses and facilitators in faith formation.

8. **Demographic and Cultural Adaptation**

- **Balancing Tradition and Modernity:**
 - Striking a balance between maintaining traditional practices and meeting contemporary expectations.
- **Addressing Demographic Shifts:**
 - Giving greater consideration to the fact that we have an aging population. We need to provide digital competence training for older parishioners. Need for a better understanding of the cultural demographics in the parish or school population to more effectively communicate the Gospel.

This grouped analysis highlights the fact that while many important areas are addressed, common themes around supporting clergy and lay leadership, energising youth ministry, refining pastoral outreach, ensuring financial sustainability, and improving internal communication and collaboration, remain as areas where additional focus is needed.

FOCUS QUESTION:

2.2 Which pastoral areas we would like to see **PRIORITY GIVEN** in our own local faith communities?

1. **Youth Engagement and Future Leadership**

- **Engaging Youth and Nurturing the Future Church:**

Emphasis on involving young people through dedicated ministries, youth councils, and contemporary outreach. This includes challenging and empowering youth to step into leadership roles and be active participants in shaping the Church's future.

- **Developing Leadership and Faith Formation:**

Prioritising the training and formation of both emerging and established leaders—including youth, teachers, parents, and volunteers—to equip them for service and deepen overall faith formation.

2. **Strengthening Parish–School Collaboration**

- **Building Stronger Partnerships:**

Encouraging closer ties between parishes and schools to support families, share resources, and create a seamless experience in faith formation. Joint events, shared liturgical celebrations, and coordinated communications are also seen as crucial.

- **Collaborative Faith Initiatives:**

Working together to develop educational programs, support networks, and practical plans that unite both communities in a common Catholic identity.

3. **Community Connection, Inclusion and Social Outreach**

- **Strengthening Community Bonds:**

Developing initiatives that foster genuine connection—through community prayer, social events, and outreach—to build trust and support among parishioners and local families.

- **Fostering a Culture of Listening and Inclusion:**

Creating spaces where diverse voices are heard and valued, ensuring that marginalised groups, women, and various cultural communities are actively engaged.

- **Integrating Faith and Social Justice:**

Merging evangelisation efforts with outreach that addresses societal challenges, supports marginalized groups, and integrates social justice as an expression of faith.

4. **Spiritual Growth and Liturgical Enrichment**

- **Cultivating Spiritual Growth:**

Enhancing opportunities for prayer, liturgy, and worship to deepen individual and collective spiritual lives. This includes innovative approaches to liturgical formation that resonates with modern congregations.

- **Renewing Evangelization Efforts:**

Revitalising traditional and contemporary methods of spreading the Gospel, ensuring that the message of faith reaches a broader audience in an engaging and accessible way.

5. **Environmental Stewardship and Holistic Well-Being**

- **Caring for Creation:**

Promoting ecological stewardship as part of living out one's faith, with initiatives that involve community gardens, environmental education, and sustainable practices.

- **Promoting Health and Building Trust:**

Focusing on holistic well-being by supporting both the physical and emotional health of parishioners, which in turn strengthens interpersonal relationships and community resilience.

6. **Modern Communication and Digital Engagement**

- **Enhancing Digital Outreach:**

Embracing modern communication tools—such as social media and online platforms—to share the Gospel, engage with a broader community, and keep the Church's message relevant in today's digital world.

Each of these areas reflects a collective desire to nurture individual faith and to build a more engaged, inclusive, collaborative, and vibrant faith community where everyone—young and old—can contribute to a shared future.





SATURDAY, 15TH FEBRUARY 2025

SESSION THREE: Pastoral Priorities and Actions (2025-2030) - PRIORITIZING

SESSION AIM:

To begin to prioritise key pastoral areas for the next five years that will help our Diocese become more Christ-centred, synodal, and missionary, noting areas of consensus and divergence.

FOCUS QUESTION:

3.1 Which pastoral areas under consideration by this Assembly, do we want to see priority given over the next five years, to help our parish and school communities, and the whole Diocese, to become a more Christ-centred, synodal and missionary?

1. Engaging Youth and Nurturing the Future Church

- Empowering youth in leadership roles
- Youth involvement in liturgy and parish activities
- Strengthening youth faith formation
- Creating faith-centred spaces for youth engagement
- Addressing disconnection of youth from the Church
- Promoting digital evangelisation for youth.

2. Strengthening Parish-School Collaboration

- Fostering stronger school-parish partnerships
- Integrating Catholic teachings more deeply in schools
- Aligning faith formation efforts between parishes and schools
- Focus on ministry to families and encouraging family involvement in Church life.

3. Strengthening Community Bonds and Outreach

- Building welcoming and inclusive parish communities
- Reaching out to marginalized groups and inactive Catholics
- Encouraging personal connections and active parish participation
- Sharing resources among parishes.

4. Fostering a Culture of Listening and Inclusion

- Dialogue with diverse communities (youth, marginalized, Aboriginal people)
- Promoting inclusivity in Church leadership and decision-making
- Listening to those disconnected from faith
- Addressing social justice and equity issues within Church structures.

5. Developing Leadership and Faith Formation

- Establishing leadership training programs for clergy and laity
- Encouraging leadership models based on shared responsibility
- Empowering lay people for faith-based leadership roles
- Promoting mentorship and succession planning.

6. **Cultivating Spiritual Growth**

- Strengthening personal and communal faith journeys
- Enhancing adult catechesis and faith education
- Encouraging deeper understanding of Catholic teachings.

7. **Renewing Evangelisation Efforts**

- Developing mission-driven outreach strategies
- Engaging digital platforms for evangelization
- Reinvigorating parish engagement with non-practicing Catholics
- Encouraging personal faith-sharing and witness.

8. **Enhancing Liturgy, Worship and Prayer Experiences**

- Creating meaningful and participatory liturgical celebrations
- Improving worship experiences to engage diverse communities
- Training liturgical ministers to enhance faith experiences.

9. **Promoting Healing, Building Trust and Strengthening Relationships**

- Addressing past traumas and broken relationships in Church communities
- Creating opportunities for reconciliation and healing
- Encouraging trust-building within parishes and diocesan structures.

10. **Fostering Communication and Engagement Through Technology**

- Utilising social media for faith engagement
- Improving Church communication strategies
- Using digital tools for outreach and evangelisation.

11. **Faith and Justice Integration and Collaborative Outreach**

- Strengthening Catholic Social Teaching in action
- Encouraging outreach programs for marginalised communities
- Addressing contemporary social issues through faith initiatives.

12. **Caring for Creation and Developing Ecological Stewardship**

- Integrating *Laudato Si* principles in Church activities
- Promoting environmental responsibility within the Church
- Encouraging sustainability initiatives in parishes and schools

Key Interconnections and Insights

- **Youth Engagement** (Theme 1) is deeply connected to **Parish-School Collaboration** (Theme 2), **Faith Formation and Leadership Development** (Theme 5), and **Liturgy and Worship** (Theme 8).
- **Fostering Inclusion and Listening** (Theme 4) supports all other themes, as it ensures engagement with different voices in the Church.
- **Evangelization Efforts** (Theme 7) are increasingly reliant on **Technology and Digital Outreach** (Theme 10) to connect with modern audiences.
- **Healing and Trust-Building** (Theme 9) is crucial for re-engaging those disconnected from the Church.
- **Environmental Stewardship** (Theme 12) aligns with Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si* and can serve as a unifying cause for intergenerational engagement.

SESSION THREE: Pastoral Priorities and Actions (2025-2030) - PRIORITIZING

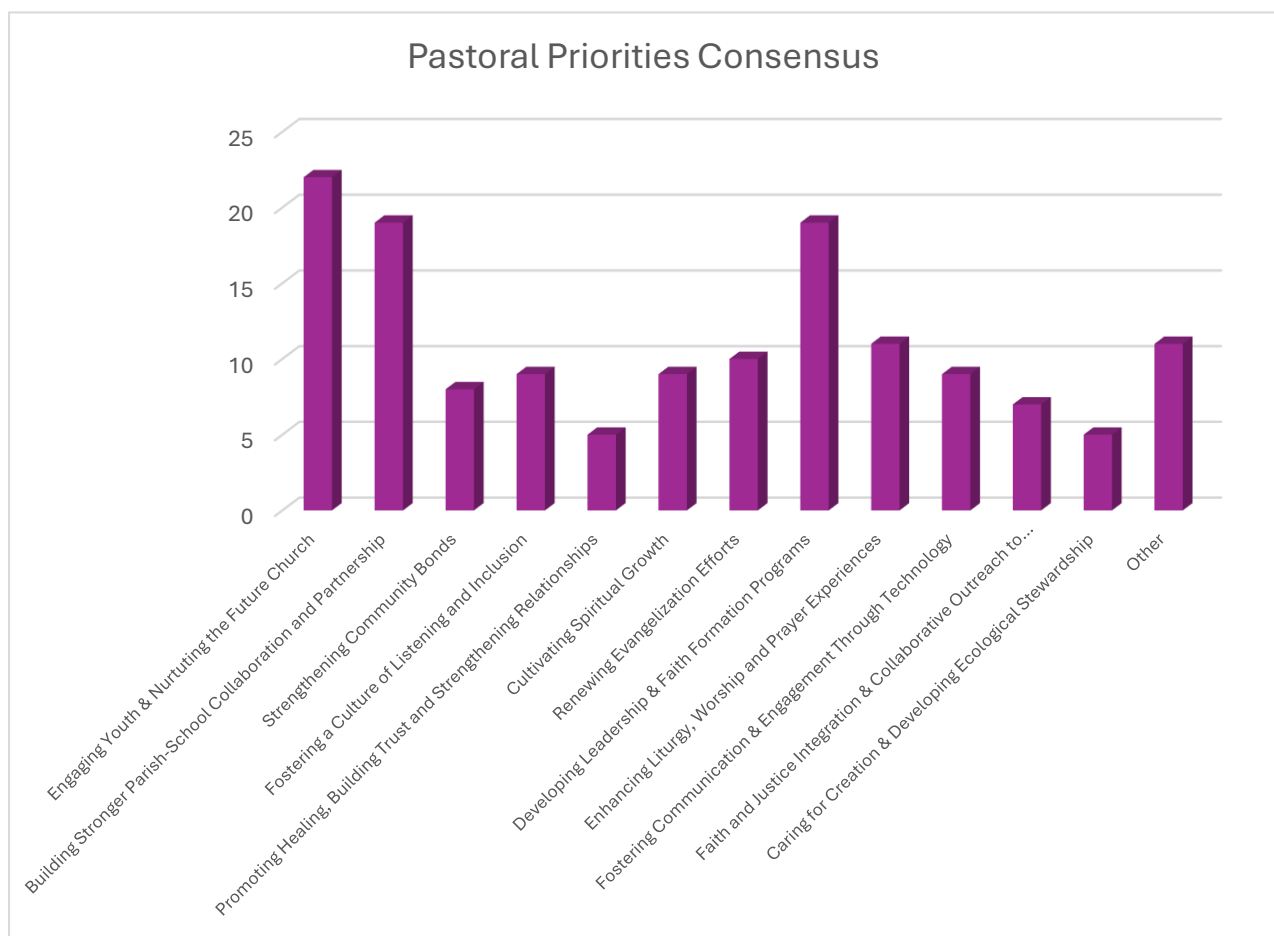
FOCUS QUESTION:

3.2 Considering the current realities of our Diocese, the calls of the Australian Plenary Council, and the Synod on Synodality, which of the 12 pastoral goals under consideration does our table recommend top priority be given for the next five years to help our Diocese become more Christ-centred, synodal, and missionary?

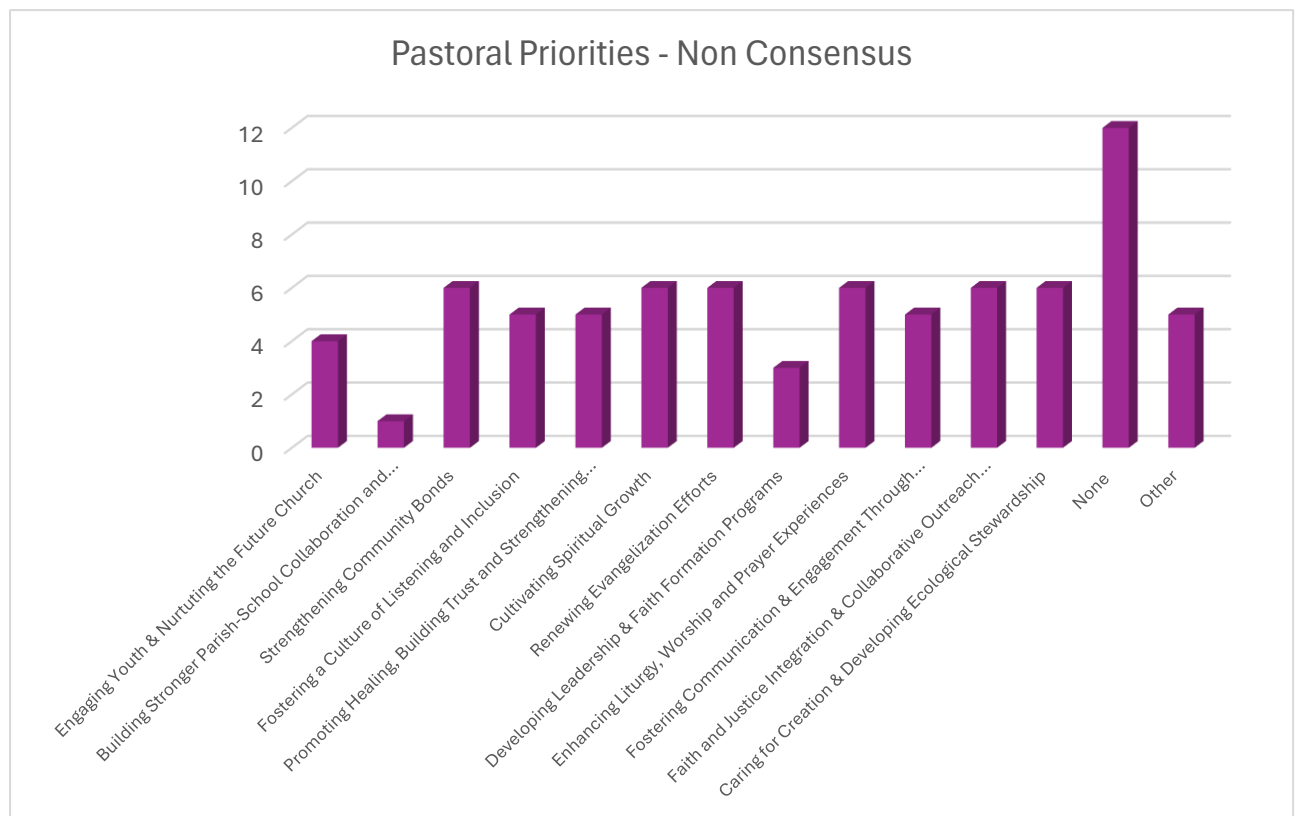
After listening to individual responses to question 3.1, Table Group members were invited to engage in a facilitated discussion to try to reach a consensus on which of the 12 pastoral areas they recommend priority be given over the next five years, to help the Diocese become more Christ-centred, synodal, and missionary. When a Table Group reached consensus, the Table Scribe marked the selected pastoral area accordingly.

The following graphs represents the feedback from the 27 Table Groups.

A. Pastoral areas prioritised for the next five years based on GROUP CONSENSUS.



B. Pastoral Areas Prioritized for the Next Five Years Without Group Consensus but Recommended to the Assembly



The Holy Spirit Intervened!

The results of the feedback from the Table Groups, where consensus was reached on which of the 12 pastoral areas should be prioritised over the next five years, revealed that delegates felt more time was needed for the Table Groups to prayerfully reflect on the pastoral areas under consideration.

Listening attentively to the delegates at this moment marked a significant breakthrough in the Assembly. The Holy Spirit was speaking through the assembled delegates. This insight led to a necessary adjustment in the planned process.

In light of this Spirit-led revelation, the focus question for Table Groups to discern together then became:

"Among the pastoral areas under consideration, which do we believe will provide the greatest leverage in gaining initial momentum for our Diocese to become more Christ-centred, synodal, and missionary?"

SESSION FOUR: Pastoral Priorities and Actions (2025-2030) – PRIORITIZING

SESSION AIM:

To prioritise the pastoral areas that will provide the initial leverage and drive for a mission-focused future for the Diocese over the next five years.

FOCUS QUESTION

4.1 Among the pastoral areas under consideration, which do we think will provide the greatest leverage in giving initial momentum to our Diocese becoming more Christ-centred, synodal and missionary?

Table Summary statements

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1 | The Diocesan Youth and Family Forum engages youth and strengthens their Church connection through Parish-School partnerships, ensuring authentic youth voices are heard, as guided by Pope Francis' vision, with families actively involved in shaping their faith journey. |
| 2 | Strengthening Parish-School collaboration will enhance youth engagement and foster the growth of the future Church. |
| 3 | As Pilgrims of Hope, we are building vibrant, Christ-centred communities focused on faith formation, pastoral outreach, and inclusion, upholding the sacred dignity of every person. |
| 4 | Youth engagement and Parish-School collaboration form a foundation for growth, supported by faith formation at all levels. With Parish, School, and Diocesan support, a culture of listening and inclusivity will foster spiritual growth and strengthen the community. |
| 5 | Evangelisation is about encountering Jesus Christ and helping people find meaning, rather than simply applying doctrine to dictate engagement. This understanding then shapes leadership, outreach, and engagement, ensuring a more personal and transformative approach. |
| 6 | Fostering co-responsibility, cultivating leadership, and nurturing Christ-centred faith formation are essential for a thriving and engaged community. |
| 7 | Providing formation for all to deepen understanding of why we believe and why we gather is essential for strengthening faith and community engagement. |
| 8 | Prioritise formation and leadership development for mission and ministry by equipping youth, school, ministry, and parish leaders with both spiritual and practical skills to enhance their personal growth and leadership effectiveness. |
| 9 | Strengthen our positive presence by deepening our understanding of Catholic faith, teachings, and values, enabling effective outreach to the most vulnerable. |
| 10 | Leadership development and faith formation are essential to youth engagement and Parish-School collaboration. Strengthening these connections will renew evangelisation efforts, fostering deeper faith among families and students within both schools and parishes. |

- 11 To build a vibrant future Church, we must engage youth through faith formation, leadership, and meaningful connections. Strengthening Parish-School partnerships, youth leadership programs, and service opportunities will empower young people. By listening to and empowering youth, we nurture a strong, mission-driven Church that will thrive for generations to come.
- 12 A Christ-centred, synodal, and missionary Church begins with spiritual growth, enriched liturgy, and prayer. Engaging youth and nurturing the future Church are key priorities. Faith and justice, outreach to the marginalised, and leadership development serve as foundational pillars. These elements strengthen and unite communities, guiding all priorities in faith and mission.
- 13 The statement emphasises the importance of listening and inclusion as foundational elements for strengthening community engagement. By prioritising active listening, efforts become more effective and meaningful. The call is to work with others, not just for them, recognising listening as an act of humility that opens space for the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire true collaboration.
- 14 Engaging youth is crucial for nurturing the future Church through mentorship, active listening, and youth-led leadership. Spiritual growth and the Word of God must remain central, with families, parishes, and schools providing strong support. Youth voices must be heard and valued, ensuring a faith community that responds to their needs and fosters lasting engagement.
- 15 By cultivating a culture of listening and inclusion, empowering youth, and developing leaders, we shape the future Church. Through faith formation and responsive action, we align with the Holy Spirit's calling, becoming a pilgrim people of hope, strengthened by liturgy, worship, and prayer.
- 16 Leadership and faith formation programs serve as the foundation for equipping parish and diocesan members for more effective pastoral work. Strengthening leaders first enables a greater focus on youth, schools, and the future Church, fostering community and unity. Properly forming current leaders is essential to uniting parishes, youth, and diocesan communities, ensuring a stronger, more engaged Church.
- 17 To engage all faith communities in renewing their encounter with Christ through strong, informed, and Spirit-led leadership.
- 18 A Christ-centred, vibrant community that empowers, inspires action, and nurtures growth as pilgrims of hope.
- 19 Called by Christ and sent as missionary disciples, strengthened through formation and leadership for mission and ministry.
- 20 We must enhance faith formation, leadership, and liturgy to effectively fulfill our evangelisation mission—reaching the broader community, families, and youth through school partnerships.
- 21 By empowering youth, strengthening faith experiences, and fostering Parish-School collaboration, we can reignite youth engagement and ensure a vibrant future Church.
- 22 By prioritising inclusivity, relationships, and connection, we create a stronger, more united faith community that thrives in shared mission and outreach.

- 23 Fostering a culture of listening and inclusion provides the leverage, drive, inspiration, and motivation to advance all priorities, strengthening our identity as a Christ-centred, synodal, and missionary Church.
- 24 Engage youth and future Church by continuing the journey of spiritual formation, through an active, engaging parish, school (primary and secondary) relationships.
- 25 A Christ-centred mission calls us to renew evangelisation and strengthen community bonds, moving from the current to the new by engaging with others, living Christ, and being Christ in the world. By walking with others in faith, we build a renewed, inclusive, and bold evangelising Church.
- 26 A co-responsible, inclusive, and missionary Church listens, leads, and acts by opening doors, engaging communities, forming faith-driven leaders, nurturing the future Church through Parish-School partnerships, and living Catholic Social Teaching through justice and service.
- 27 Faith formation, both individual and communal, strengthens youth, families, and adults, deepens relationships, builds community, and fosters a greater understanding of why we believe and why we gather.



PROPOSED SUMMARY STATEMENT

From the pastoral areas identified by each of the Table Groups as having the greatest potential to drive or leverage a mission-focused future for the Diocese over the next five years, the following statement is proposed as a succinct, clear, and cohesive summary.

The Diocese of Sale is committed to nurturing a Christ-centred, synodal, and mission-driven future.

This strategic vision will be actualised through the development of co-responsibility and shared leadership within, and across, all Catholic faith communities and organisations, ensuring listening, discernment, inclusion, welcome and outreach.

Our faith leaders will focus on practices that engage youth, strengthen faith formation for all members, and deepen Parish-School collaboration.

These efforts will be supported and enriched by prayer, the Word of God, contemporary, meaningful Eucharistic worship, lived faith experiences, and digital communication.





SESSION FIVE: Assembly Wrap Up

SESSION AIM:

To reflect on the Assembly's impact, share a message for the Diocesan Pastoral Plan, and to express gratitude to those who supported the event

(The following message is a compilation of the feedback received from the 27 Table Groups.)






MESSAGE TO BISHOP GREG AND THE DIOCESAN MISSION COUNCIL FROM THE DELEGATES OF THE DIOCESE OF SALE 2025 ASSEMBLY

Dear Bishop Greg and Members of the Diocesan Mission Council,

We are deeply grateful for this Assembly and for the opportunity to listen, to collaborate in the spirit of synodality and to discern our future path. We recognise the goodwill, dedication, and leadership that have guided this process, and we stand with you as we move forward together.

Now is the time for bold and resolute action. The Holy Spirit is at work, and we must not allow this momentum to fade. We encourage you to step forward with courage, clarity, and conviction, translating our shared vision into a clear, actionable strategic Diocesan Pastoral Plan. This plan needs to be concise, measurable, and easily implemented across all faith communities and Diocesan bodies and organisations, such as parishes, schools, hospitals, aged care facilities and social services, that will renew and strengthen our Diocese.

We urge you to prioritise:

-  *A culture of co-responsibility, ensuring that all parishes, schools, and organisations work together in a spirit of shared mission.*
-  *Faith formation and evangelisation, particularly for youth and families, fostering a balance between tradition and contemporary engagement.*
-  *Embracing new ways to connect with and serve our communities through digital evangelisation and outreach.*
-  *The central role of liturgy and prayer, ensuring that prayer and worship remains a source of spiritual nourishment, unity, and inspiration, guiding and celebrating our faith and action.*
-  *A Church that goes out, embodying Pope Francis' vision of a refuge for the broken and a beacon of hope in our world.*

We trust in your leadership and stand behind you, ready to work together in building a vibrant, mission-driven Diocese. Embrace a synodal journey that continues to listen to our communities, builds on existing strengths, communicates regularly, and acts decisively to transform inspired words into real-world impact.

The road ahead is long, but we believe in the power of faith, unity, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Let us go forth with courage. The time to act is now.

In faith and hope,

The Delegates of the 2025 Diocesan Assembly



BEYOND THIS ASSEMBLY – Towards 2030

This assembly recommends a set of pastoral priorities to Bishop Greg & the Diocesan Mission Council

During 2025, Bishop Greg, and the DMC, draw up a draft Five Year Pastoral Plan for the Diocese

The draft Diocesan Pastoral Plan is published for consultation & feedback

Finalization & Promulgation of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan

BEYOND THIS ASSEMBLY – Towards 2030

Faith communities (*) draw up a plan of how they will implement the pastoral priorities.

Pastoral Plans presented to the Bishop & DMC

Faith communities put their plans into action over 5 years (2026-2030)

2030 Review, Evaluation, at faith community & Diocesan level - Diocesan Assembly

Appendix 1

THANK YOU

Thank You to all who contributed their time, talents, energies and expertise to making the 2025 Diocesan Assembly a Spirit-led, unifying and mission-focussed experience.

Bishop Greg Bennet

Bishop of Sale.

The Clergy of the Diocese of Sale

All Assembly Delegates

Special Guest Participant Observers:

Bishop Richard Treloar;

Rev Fiona Morrison;

Dr Trudy Dantis;

Rev Dr Max Vodola;

Anglican Bishop of Gippsland

UCA Presbytery of Gippsland

National Coordinator, Synod of Bishops 2021-2024. Director, National Centre for Pastoral Research (ACBC)

Parish Priest, All Saints Parish, Fitzroy, Research Coordinator, Lecturer and Head of the Department of Church History at Catholic Theological College.

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Madelaine Schumann, Bairnsdale.

Members of the Assembly Steering Committee

Paul Velten (Chair)	Director of Catholic Education, DOSCEL
Bernadette Myers	DOSCEL, Executive Secretary to the Director
Mary Winter	Diocesan Business Manager
Cathy Dougan	Personal Assistant to the Bishop
Tara Bau	Pastoral Life and Mission Team
Jess Mills	Diocesan Animation Team
Br Tony Clark, fms	Pastoral Life and Mission Team
Siji Dominic	Pastoral Life and Mission Team
Shane Doyle	DOSCEL, General Manager Information and Technology
Jenifer Hanratty	Diocesan Animation Team
Liz Hartmann	DOSCEL, Compliance and Risk Coordinator
Jan James	DOSCEL, Compliance and Risk Support Office

Members of the Diocesan Chancery Team

Mary Winter	Diocesan Business Manager
Cathy Dougan	Personal Assistant to the Bishop
Tara Bau	Pastoral Life and Mission Team
Br Tony Clark, fms	Pastoral Life and Mission Team
Siji Dominic	Pastoral Life and Mission Team
Lorraine Jennings	Diocesan Safeguarding Officer
Annie Pawley	Diocesan Archivist
Christine Ponweera	Diocesan Accountant
Tracey Puncheon	Diocesan Financial Administration
Patrick Ross	Diocesan Facilities Manager
Melanie Saba	Professional Standards Officer
Anne Taylor	Pastoral Life and Mission Team

Members of the Assembly Liturgy Team

Fiona Dyball (Team Leader)
Jane Mitchell
Donrita Reefman
Anne Taylor
Mike Hansen

Members of the DOSCEL IT Team

Shane Doyle
Aiden Baumgartner
Anthony Polato
Chris Marsden
Kris Archer
Kevin Ellis
Clinton Nesbitt
Liam Ahearn

Members of the Assembly Floor Management Team

Cathy Dougan
Liz Hartmann
Jan James

Table Facilitators

Nicole Dudman
Christopher Roga
Jenifer Hanratty
Rose Duffy
Anne -Marie Robb
James Mazzolini
Siji Dominic
Sophy Morley
Tara Bau
Beverly O'Brien
Judith Campbell
Alex Ignace
Ryan Greer
Madelaine Schumann

Wangui Gaciabu
Jerusha Benjamin
Ged Shelton
Jessica Mills
Etherton Mandizvidza
Fr Aju Varghese
Jean Paul Antoine
Geraldine Naismith
Vivian Crasto
Cathy Jenkins
Liz Privitera
Robyn Rebbechi
Fr Bernard Buckley

Table Scribes:

Liam Doherty
Dianne Austin
Jacinta Johnston
Pamela McKillop
Roslyn Joyner
Andrew Greco
Nicole Mott
Katrina Dourley
Dom Ryan
Kirsten Daly
John Fazzino
Helen Staindl
Tresa Andrews

Martin Keogh
Richard Wans
Rose Lee
Pracena Joseph
Dominic Thomas
Michelle Inchincoli
Kirrilly Bridger
Dermot Cannon
Fiona McKenna
Tahilia O'Callaghan
Emily Rogers
Mark Walsh
Brett Van Berkel
Emily D'Sylva

First Aid Officers

Deidre Jackson
Rhonda O'Connor
Lisa Norman

Federation University Management Team and Catering Team

Fr James Fernandez CP PP and Parishioners of Lumen Christi Parish, Churchill

Appendix 2

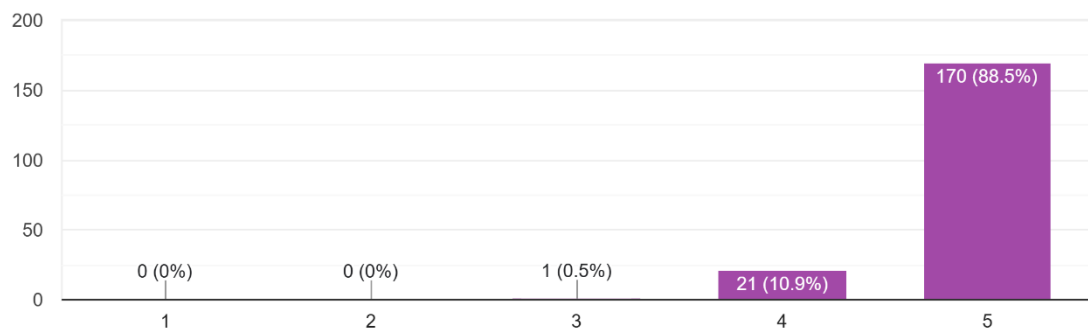
2025 DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY EVALUATION FEEDBACK TOTAL 192 RESPONSES

COMMUNICATION – Prior to the Assembly

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

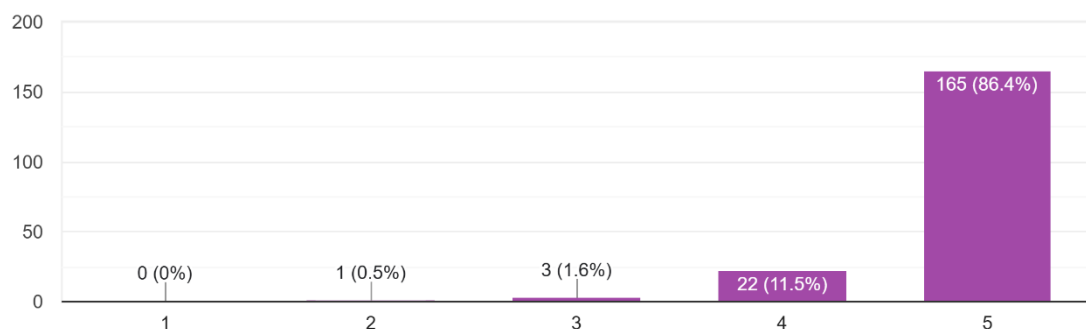
1. My experience of registering for the Assembly was easily done.

192 responses



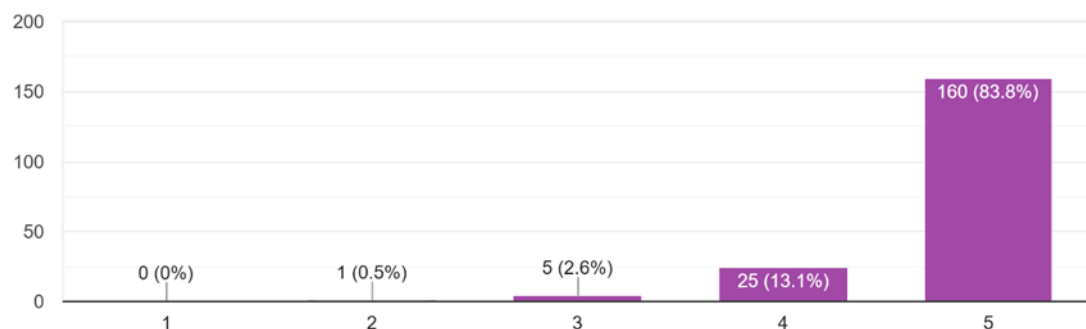
2. The materials and resources required for the Assembly were well received and in a timely manner.

191 responses



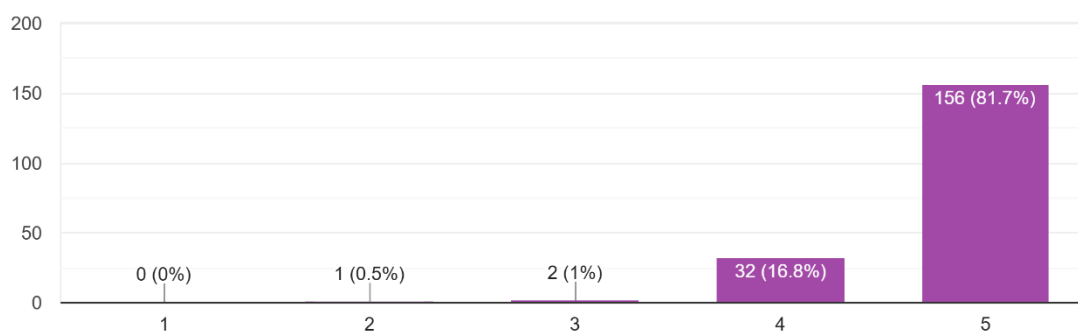
3. The materials and resources assisted me well in my preparation for the Assembly.

191 responses



4. The use of email and text messaging was appropriate and sufficient.

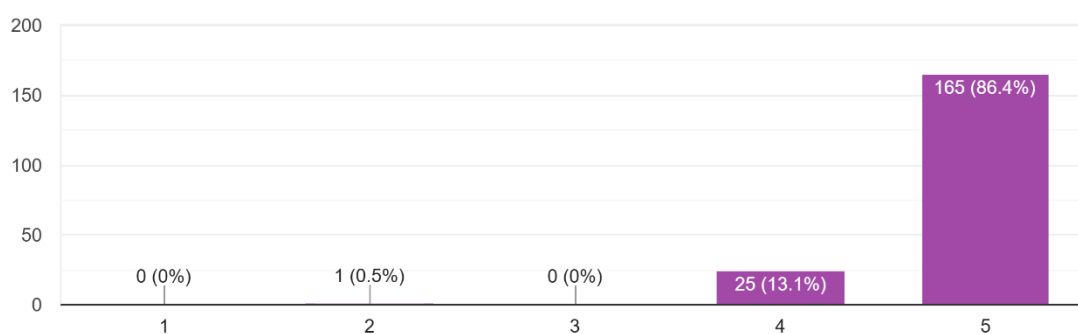
191 responses



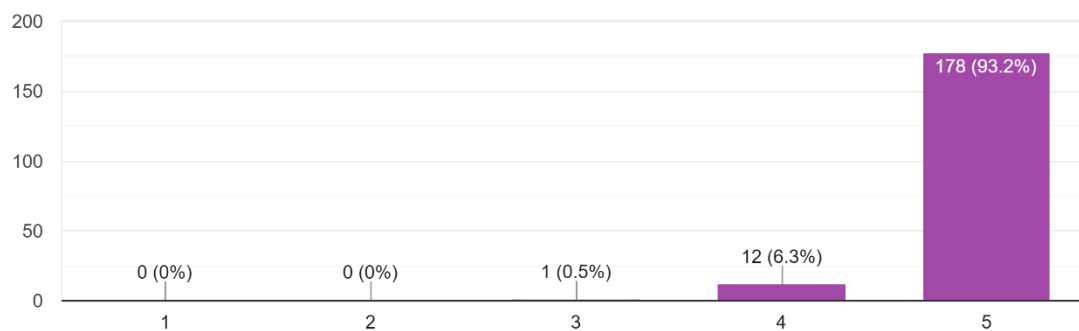
COMMUNICATION – Throughout the Assembly

5. The information throughout the Assembly was delivered in a clear and helpful manner.

191 responses



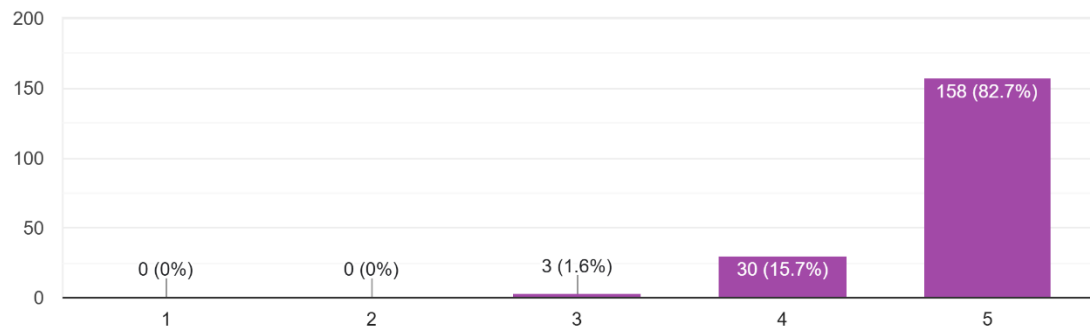
191 responses



ASSEMBLY PROCESS

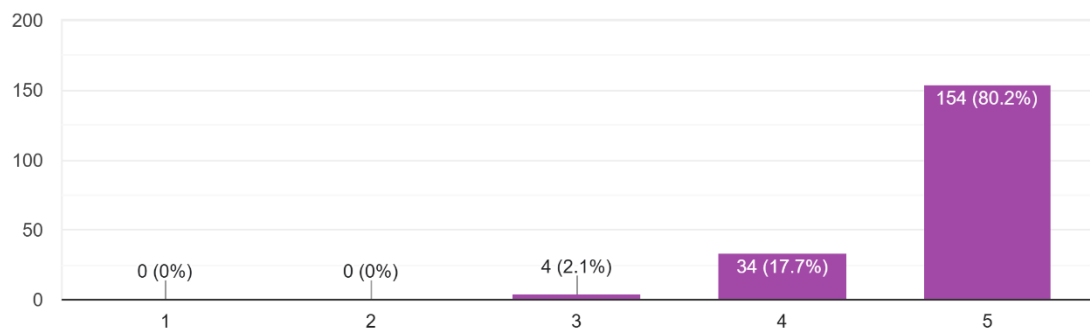
7. The Assembly process met the expectations I had prior to attending?

191 responses



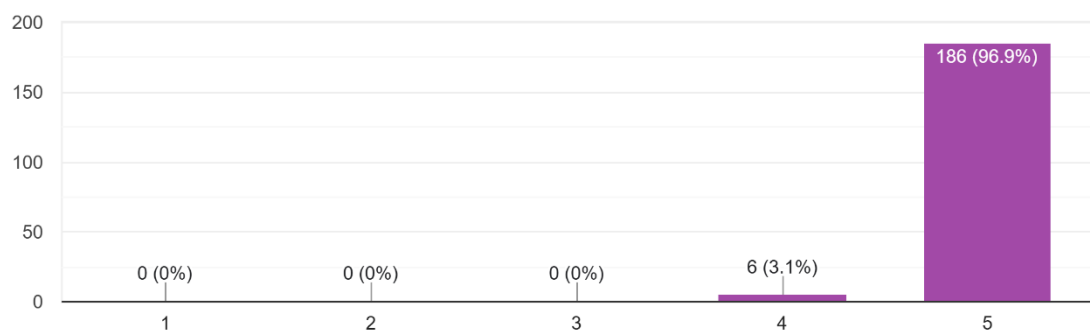
8. I found the process used throughout the Assembly was engaging and stimulating.

192 responses



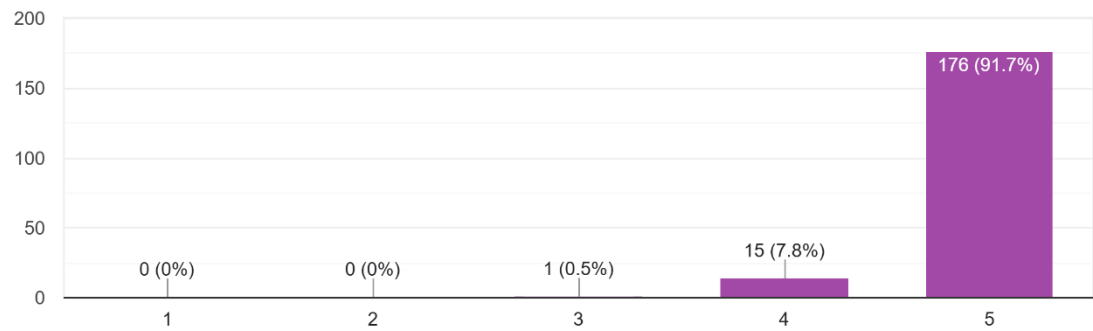
9. I felt respected and listened to in my Table Group.

192 responses



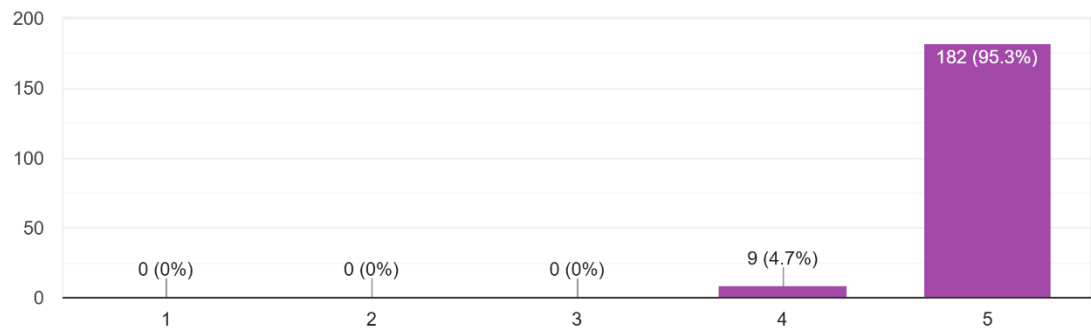
10. The Table Facilitator helped us all the engage fully in the process.

192 responses



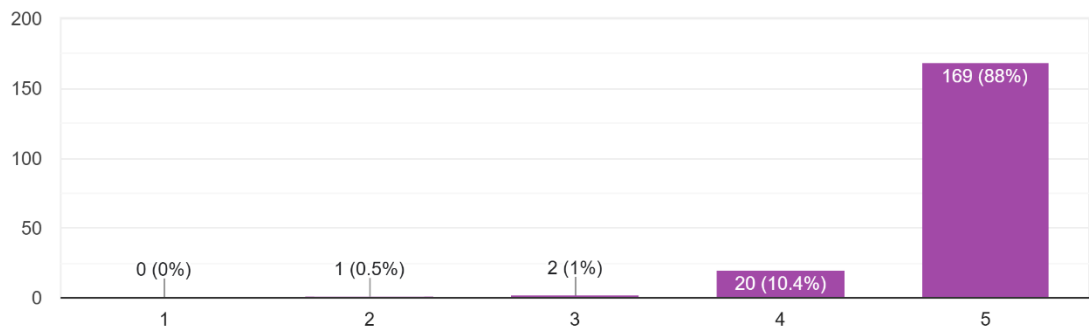
11. The Table Scribe did a good job of recording our responses and other assigned tasks.

191 responses



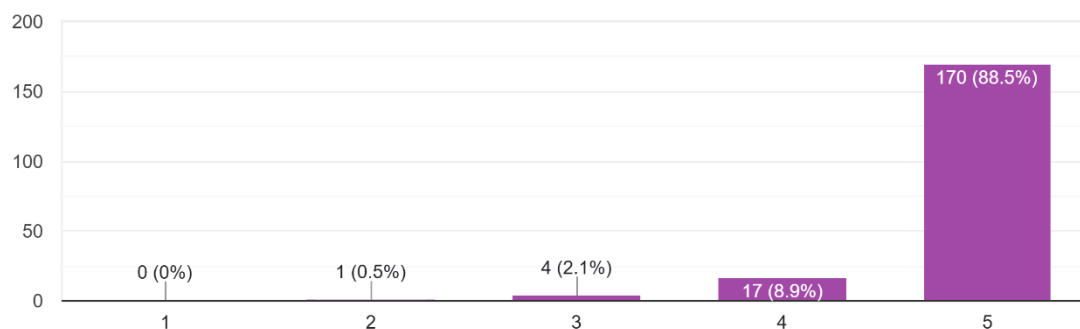
12. The process of the Assembly (spiritual conversations) enabled me to engage deeply with the agenda and final outcomes of the Assembly.

192 responses



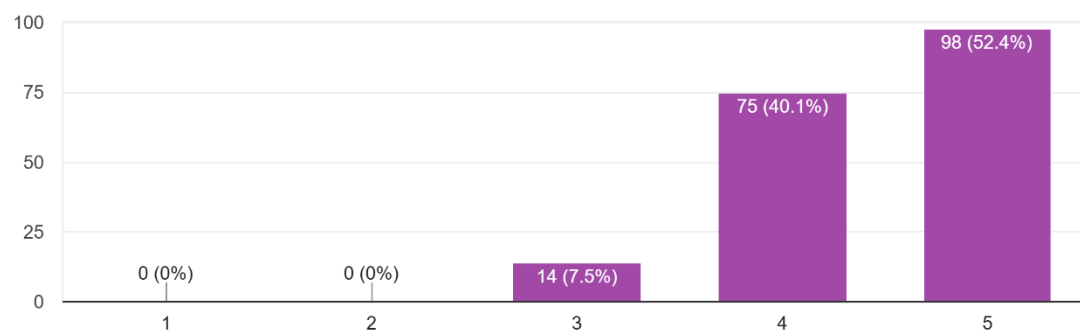
13. The Facilitator of the Assembly assisted the process by offering clear instructions, clarification as required and flexibility in engaging with the Assembly agenda.

192 responses



14. I leave this assembly feeling as though we have achieved clear outcomes for the next five years

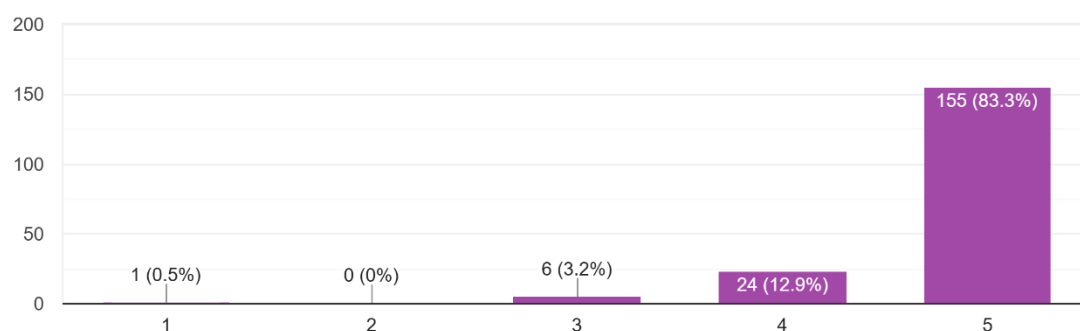
187 responses



LITURGY and PRAYER

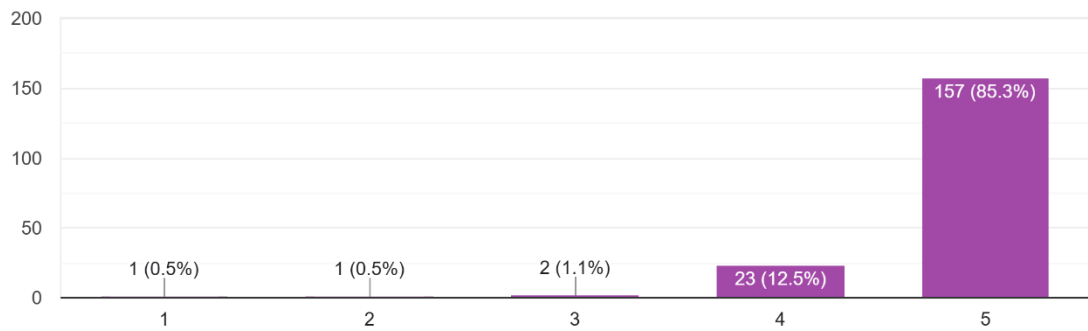
15. The Opening Assembly Prayer assisted in gathering us, focussing us and being called to prayer.

186 responses



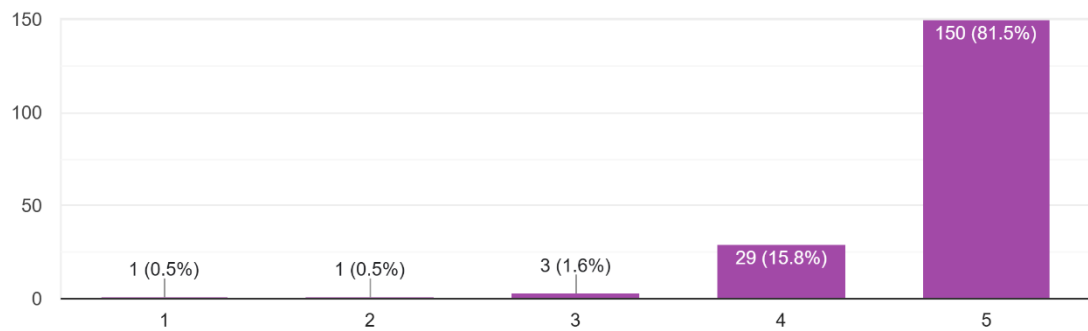
16, I was able to participate actively in the prayer liturgies and celebrations of Mass.

184 responses



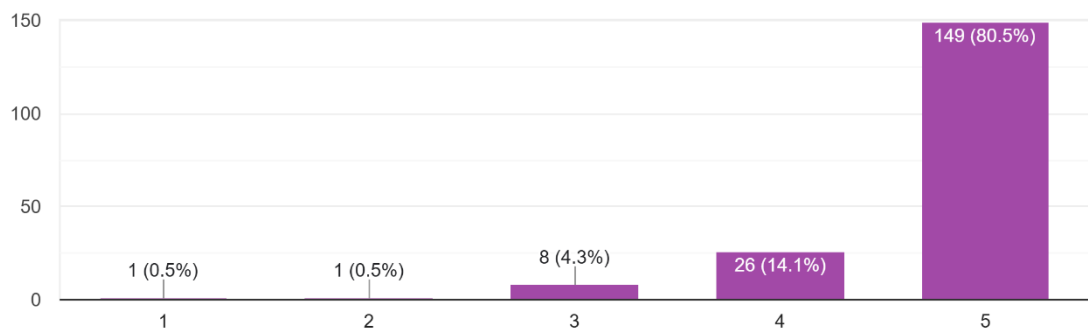
17. My experience of the liturgies helped to connect me with the process of the Assembly.

184 responses



18. My experience of the liturgies provided a balance between silence and praise & worship of God.

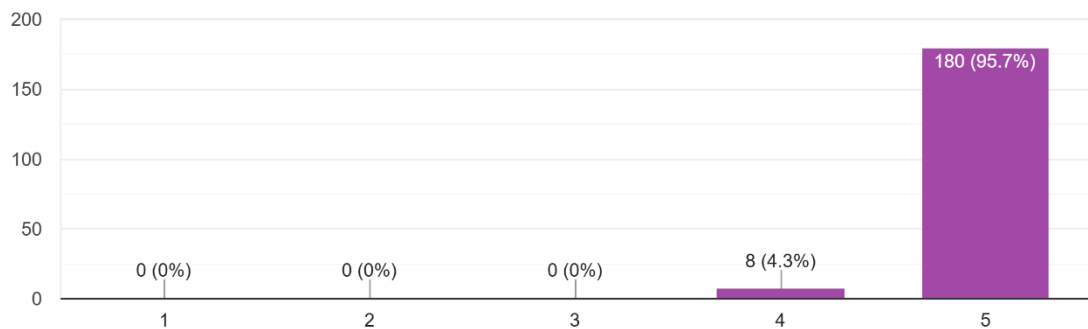
185 responses



HOSPITALITY

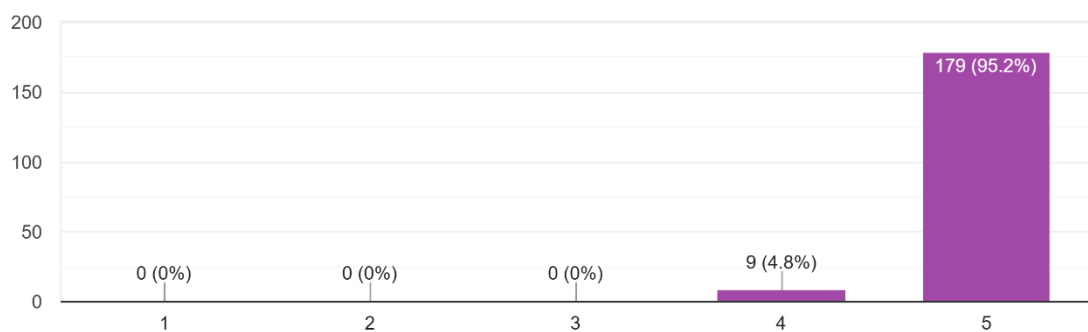
19. I was satisfied with the facilities of Federation University.

188 responses



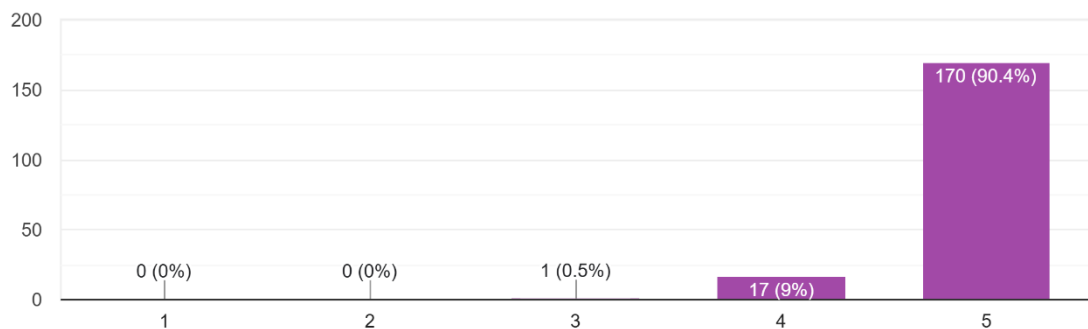
20. I was made to feel welcome and included throughout the Assembly.

188 responses



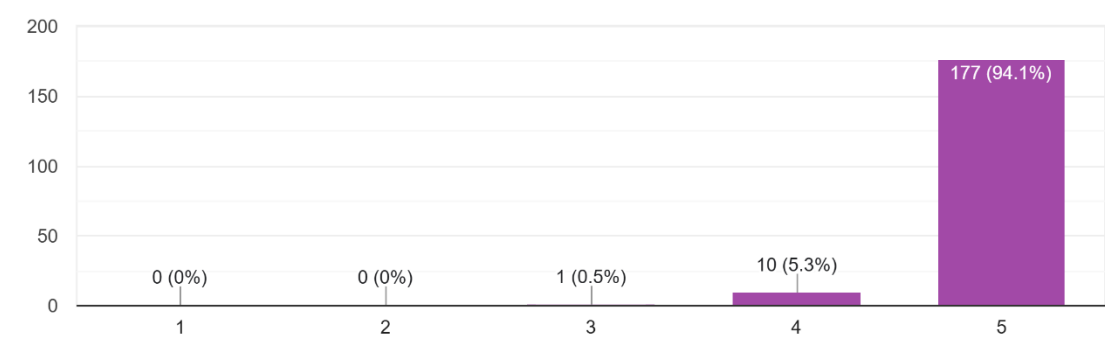
21. My needs, and the needs of others, were carefully considered in assisting with our participation during the Assembly.

188 responses



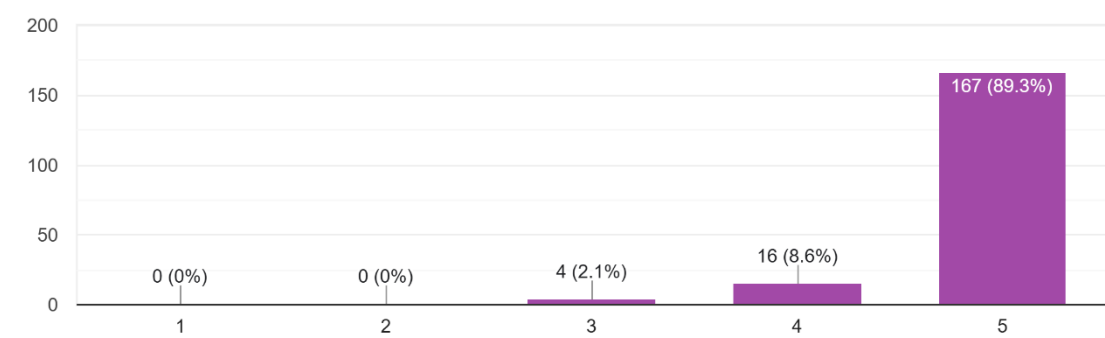
22. The support staff attended to my wellbeing and safety throughout the Assembly.

188 responses



23. I was satisfied with the catering (Morning=Afternoon Teas, lunch and Friday night evening meal)

187 responses



Appendix 3

2025 DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY DELEGATES & PARTICIPANTS

Delegates

Fr	Joseph	Abutu
Fr	Ajin	Albarnas
Mrs.	JA	Alexander
Mrs.	Margaret	Anderson
Mr.	Jean Michel	Andre
Mrs.	Teresa	Andrews
Mrs.	Louise	Anketell
Fr	Jithin	Anto
Mr.	Jean-Paul	Antoine
Fr.	Prabhu	Antony
Fr.	Cas	Arul
Mrs.	Di	Austin
Ms.	Shari	Balog
Mrs.	Veronica	Barnes
Mrs.	Tara	Bau
Mr.	Vince	Beer
Mrs.	Jerusha	Benjamin
Bishop	Greg	Bennet
Mr.	Julian	Blackford
Mrs.	Cathy	Blackford
Mr.	Gary	Blackwood
Ms.	Josie	Bleeser
Mr.	Joel	Brayshaw
Ms.	Kirrilly	Bridger
Mrs.	Lisa	Broeren
Fr.	Bernard	Buckley
Mrs.	Libby	Byrnes
Ms.	Judith	Campbell
Mr.	Dermot	Cannon
Mrs.	Michelle	Charlton
Ms.	Nicole	Chingwe
Mrs.	Elaine	Christensen
Mrs.	Jo	Coldebella
Mr.	Dave	Cooper
Mrs.	Barb	Cooper
Mr.	Vivian	Crasto
Mrs.	Eileen	Crowley
Mrs.	Marie	D'alia
Mrs.	Kirsten	Daly

Dr.	Trudy	Dantis
Mrs.	Angela	Darling
Mr.	Hashika	De Silva
Mr.	Mike	Delaney
Mrs.	Leanne	Denbrok
Mr.	Richard	Denbrok
Fr.	Stanly	Devasia
Ms.	Lia	DiCorleto
Ms.	Jane	Dinnie
Mr.	Liam	Doherty
Ms.	Siji	Dominic
Mr.	Terry	Donahoe
Mr.	Pat	Dorian
Mrs.	Kate	Dourley
Mrs.	Lima	D'souza
Mrs.	Emily	D'Sylva
Ms.	Nic	Dudman
Sr	Rose	Duffy
Mrs.	Christa	Dwyer
Ms.	Fiona	Dyball
Dr.	Michael	Dyson
Sr.	Faustina	Ede
Mr.	J-M	Fanchette
Mr.	John	Fazzino
Fr	James	Fernandez
Mr.	Michael	Flynn
Mr.	John	Freeman
Mr.	Shane	Fyfe
Dr.	Wangui	Gaciabu
Mrs.	Lucy	Garvey
Fr.	Avinash	George
Mr.	Andrew	Greco
Mr.	Ryan	Greer
Mrs.	Michelle	Grimsted
Mrs.	Elsie-May	Hanna
Mrs.	Jen	Hanratty
Mr.	Mike	Hansen
Ms.	Lisa	Harkin
Mr.	Chris	Harkin
Mrs.	Jan	Hayes
Mr.	Andrew	Hewson

Mrs.	Robyn	Hewson
Mrs.	Catherine	Hill
Mrs.	Michelle	Hinds
Fr	Brendan	Hogan
Mrs.	Paula	Holmes
Fr	Darren	Howie
Fr	Mark	Hughes
Ms.	Danni	Hughes
Mr.	Alex	Ignace
Mrs.	Michelle	Inchincoli
Ms.	Dee	Jackson
Ms.	Cathy	Jenkins
Mrs.	Lorraine	Jennings
Mrs.	Jacinta	Johnston
Mrs.	Pracena	Joseph
Mrs.	Ros	Joyner
Mrs.	Anne	Kelly
Deacon	Mark	Kelly
Mr.	Martin	Keogh
Ms.	Jess	Klenkowski
Fr	Jeff	Kleynjans
Mrs.	Bec	Kollaris
Fr.	Peter	Kooloos
Dr.	Chris	Laming
Mr.	Nick	Lee
Mrs.	Rose	Lee
Fr	Manny	Lomagno
Ms.	Liz	Lupeamanu
Mr.	Etherton	Mandizvidza
Deacon	Michael	Manuel
Mr.	Gerry	Marvin
Fr.	Confidence	Masvosva
Mr.	James	Mazzolini
Mrs.	Genevieve	McCartin
Ms.	Fiona	McKenna
Mr.	Peter	McKenna
Ms.	Lisa	McKenna
Mrs.	Pamela	McKillop
Mrs.	Marg	McQuillen
Ms.	Joanie	Micah
Mrs.	Jess	Mills
Mrs.	Jane	Mitchell
Mrs.	Chris	Mitchener
Mr.	Xavier	Montoya
Mrs.	Maria	Moore
Ms.	Sophy	Morley

Mr.	Brett	Morris
Rev.	Fee	Morrison
Mrs.	Nicole	Mott
Mr.	Danny	Mulqueen
Mrs.	Trish	Mulqueen
Mrs.	Peta	Murray
Mrs.	Geraldine	Naismith
Mr.	Geoff	Neeson
Fr.	Hiep	Nguyen
Mrs.	Lisa	Norman
Mrs.	Cathy	Noy
Mrs.	Tahlia	O'Callaghan
Mrs.	Bev	O'Brien
Mr.	Ed	O'Brien
Mrs.	Ruth	O'Brien
Fr	Denis	O'Bryan
Ms.	Lucy	O'Connell
Mrs.	Rhonda	O'Connor
Fr.	Edwin	Ogbuka
Mr.	Chris	Olejarz
Ms.	Liz	O'Loughlin
Sr.	Victoria	Orinya
Fr	Francis	Otobo
Mrs.	Liz	Overdyk
Ms.	Deb	Owens
Ms.	Annie	Pawley
Mrs.	Christine	Ponweera
Mr.	Frank	Preston
Mrs.	Lize	Privitera
Ms.	Deb	Punton
Mrs.	Robyn	Rebbechi
Dr.	Paula	Rebeiro
Fr	Antony	Rebelo
Mrs.	Donrita	Reefman
Mrs.	Catherine	Riseley
Mrs.	Anne-Marie	Robb
Mrs.	Joan	Robertson
Mr.	Dom	Rode
Mr.	Chris	Roga
Ms.	Emily	Rogers
Mr.	Patrick	Ross
Mr.	Dom	Ryan
Mr.	Sharon	Sabu
Mrs.	Christine	Salu
Fr.	Antony	Santhiyagu
Mrs.	Madelaine	Schumann

Mrs.	Ged	Shelton
Mrs.	Sharon	Sparks
Ms.	Helen	Staindl
Mrs.	Nadia	Stefani
Mrs.	Bianca	Stefani
Mrs.	Cass	Supple
Mr.	Richard	Sutherland
Mr.	John	Swan
Mrs.	Anne	Taylor
Fr.	Aneesh	Thannikkot
Dr.	Dominic	Thomas
Mrs.	Sue	Townsend
Bishop	Richard	Treloar
Mrs.	Cecily	van Aswegen
Mr.	Brett	Van Berkel
Fr	Aju	Vargehese
Mrs.	Louise	Varsaci
Mr.	Paul	Velten
Mrs.	Donna	Velten
Ms.	Amy	Velten
Ms.	Gab	Verstraete
Mr.	Dom	Vigilanti
Fr	Max	Vodola
Mr.	Mark	Walsh

Mr.	Richard	Wans
Mrs.	Jodie	Ware
Fr	Michael	Willemssen
Ms.	Mary	Winter
Ms.	Jess	Winterton
Mrs.	Sharron	Wolski
Mr.	Kevin	Woodhouse
Dr.	Alice	Youlden
Fr.	Paul	Zaher

Participants

Br	Tony	Clark
Ms.	Cathy	Dougan
Mrs.	Liz	Hartmann
Mrs.	Jan	James
Mr.	Aiden	Baumgartner
Mr.	Anthony	Polato
Ms.	Karyn	O'Brien
Ms.	Alex	Price
Mr.	Brendan	Hoy
Mr.	Aaron	Gupta
Mr.	Bernard	Docherty
Mrs.	Tamara	Fernando
Mr.	Andrew	Carman





Diocese of Sale
2025