Thank you for your feedback

A response from Archbishop Ric following the 2026 Diocesan Ministry Conference

More than 400 clergy and authorised lay ministers gathered for the 2026 Diocesan Ministry Conference. We received 61 feedback forms, representing approximately 15% of delegates.

Of the 60 people who answered the overall rating question:

- **63%** rated the conference very valuable
- **22%** rated it valuable
- **8%** rated it neutral
- **7%** rated it of limited value

This means that 85% of those who answered the question rated the conference valuable or very valuable.

These responses do not speak for every delegate, but they give us a helpful picture of what people experienced and what we can learn.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond. I have read the feedback and am grateful for its warmth, honesty and thoughtfulness.

I was greatly encouraged by the number of people who spoke about encountering God, being renewed in their calling and feeling more connected to our shared life as a diocese. I was also grateful for the concerns people raised. We want to listen carefully to both the encouragement and the challenge.

What we heard most clearly

Prayer, Scripture and spiritual renewal

The strongest theme was gratitude for the emphasis on Scripture, prayer and ministry.

Many people spoke warmly about the Bible teaching, the opportunities to receive prayer and the different spaces provided for reflection. The Wednesday evening prayer gathering was especially significant for many. Some described it as a moment of personal renewal; others spoke of a renewed sense of hope for the diocese.

I was moved to read how many people felt pastored and encouraged. That was very much my hope for the conference.

Gathering as one diocese

People greatly valued being together.

There was great appreciation for the opportunity to meet people from across the diocese, renew friendships, make new connections and hear stories from different ministry contexts. The welcome, hospitality, food, coffee, hosts, volunteers and conference team were mentioned repeatedly.

Many also valued gathering in St Paul's Cathedral. It reminded us that we belong to one another and that the Cathedral is a place for the whole diocese.

The breadth of our worship

Many people found the worship and prayer deeply helpful.

At the same time, the most consistent concern was that the musical and liturgical choices we made did not reflect the breadth of Anglican traditions within our diocese. For some people, the style of worship made participation difficult or left them feeling that their tradition was not fully represented.

I have heard that clearly.

Local and Australian voices

A number of people appreciated hearing from leaders and churches beyond Melbourne. Others asked why more of the teaching and input did not come from Australian and local voices.

There was particular appreciation for the local stories and testimonies. People would like to hear more about what God is already doing in parishes and ministries across the diocese.

That is important learning for future programmes. External voices can help us lift our eyes and learn from the wider Church, but they need to be held alongside the experience and wisdom already present among us.

Participation and conversation

People valued the small groups, working groups and opportunities to contribute. Several asked for more time for conversation, shared reflection and relationship-building across the diocese.

Some found discussion in the Cathedral difficult because of the fixed seating and acoustics. Others suggested creating more opportunities to meet people beyond existing friendship, parish and episcopal-area groups.

Practical arrangements and accessibility

There was much appreciation for the organisation of the conference and for the way the Cathedral precinct was adapted. The marquee, catering, coffee, prayer rooms and welcome were all widely valued.

There were also clear practical lessons. People commented on the cold, lighting, seating, breakout spaces, the long gap before Wednesday evening, communication before and during the conference, and the uneven marquee flooring.

Shaping future diocesan gatherings

This feedback will help shape how we plan future diocesan gatherings.

We want to retain what helped people encounter God, hear the Scriptures, pray together and build relationships across the diocese. We also want to learn from the things that made participation more difficult.

As future events are planned, greater attention will be given to the breadth of our worship, the balance of local and wider voices, the space available for conversation, the shape and timing of the programme, accessibility, communication and practical arrangements.

Thank you again for responding so candidly and generously. Your feedback will help us plan future gatherings with greater care and with a fuller awareness of the breadth of our diocesan life.

I am very thankful for what God did among us during those three days. I am also thankful for the opportunity to learn. Both matter as we consider how we gather as a diocese in the future.

Please keep praying for our parishes and ministries, for all who lead and serve, and that together we may grow in confidence in Christ and be ready for the harvest.

Ric Thorpe
Archbishop of Melbourne