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Dilworth offender Ian Robert Wilson jailed three years, seven months over indecent assaults

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The first Dilworth School sexual offender to be sentenced has been jailed for three years and seven months for indecently assaulting young boys, some of whom over years.



Ian Robert Wilson was sentenced today over sexual abuse perpetrated at Dilworth School. Photo: RNZ /Jordan Bond

Ian Robert Wilson, 69 of Maraetai, East Auckland, pleaded guilty to six charges of indecent assault on a boy under 16, and one of doing an indecent act, which took place in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and one in 1990.

He is the only Dilworth-linked man to admit his offending so far. Seven other men charged in relation to indecency against boys at Dilworth School are due to go to trial next year.

In sentencing at the Auckland District Court, three victim impact statements were read, speaking of the life-long impacts the sexual offending had on the abused men and their ability to trust and maintain relationships.

Judge Collins said Wilson's offending was on boys who were vulnerable in two regards - their age and difficult home lives - and had subsequently had devastating effects on their lives.

One victim spoke of the suicidal thoughts he had afterwards, and self-harm; others spoke of the immense trouble they had forming intimate relationships; heavy drinking; marital troubles - some problems still occurring to this day, more than 40 years on.

Neil Harding, a survivor, sat metres away from the man who assaulted him as a child, and stared him in the eye before Wilson was jailed.

"Well, that day has come, Mr Wilson. You're sitting there and I'm sitting here. It feels good, it feels right. I've waited a long time," Harding said to him, looking directly at him as Wilson turned to face him.

"Do you remember? Or was I just one of many?"

Wilson's sexual offending against Harding was 43 years ago, in 1977. Harding was sent to Dilworth age 11 after his father abandoned the family.

"You were the scout master and I felt safe with you," Harding said. "Then it all changed... I was devastated, what you did to me. I am repulsed you could destroy my innocence in this way."

Harding, who could have remained anonymous, waived his right to name suppression. He said he wanted to be named to publicly take a stand against this form of abuse, urging any other abused Dilworth old boys to contact police.

Wilson - a former assistant principal, scout master and history teacher at Dilworth - wrote an apology letter to his victims, read out by his lawyer Steve Cullen.

"I take full, complete and absolute responsibility for my thoughts, words and actions. I'm deeply sorry for the trauma and embarrassment that I've caused you. I hope you will be able to find some way to heal from the hurt caused by my actions, to erase any residual thoughts from your memories, and leave me with the consequences of my actions."

Harding said he was relieved Wilson was being taken to prison, that justice had been served.

"It seems you thought you'd get away with it... times have changed for the better, and hopefully children will be safer from predators like you," Harding said.

After the sentencing, Harding said: the first of the Dilworth dominos has fallen.

Seven other men charged with indecently assaulting boys at Dilworth School have pleaded not guilty and are due to go to trial next year.

Wilson was also revealed today as previously having been convicted of a similar crime in 1997 of doing an indecent act to a boy under 12 years of age, also in relation to Dilworth School.

He had previously had name suppression for the conviction, which was today lifted by the judge and was not opposed by Cullen.

Both the Crown and Cullen said Wilson was genuinely remorseful. He wrote a full apology to his victims, which was read out by Cullen.

Judge Collins had submissions from a psychologist who noted Wilson himself was sexually abused as a child, from age nine through to 12 or 13.

He also read submissions that degenerate behaviour at Dilworth School was normalised by other teachers when Wilson joined as a young man.

"I have no doubt that as an intelligent, qualified man you knew exactly what you were doing was wrong - and seriously wrong," Judge Collins said.

"You did what you did in secret, and you sought secrecy from your victims... your victims were not only vulnerable by their age but almost invariably they were vulnerable by their personal circumstances."

With the aggravating and mitigating factors, and terminal cancer diagnoses for both Wilson and his wife taken into account, Judge Collins ended up sentencing Wilson to three years and seven months in prison.

The police investigation has heard from over 100 victims who are former students of Dilworth, an Auckland boarding school for underprivileged boys.