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Perkins jail sentence appropriate, says Archbishop

Archbishop Philip Wilson has described the handing down of a 10-year jail sentence for former St Ann's bus driver Brian Perkins as "highly appropriate".

"It's highly appropriate that he be sentenced in a substantial way for behaviour and crimes which are so horrible in their attack on the integrity of these children," he said.

During the period from 1986 to 1991, Brian Perkins committed various acts of abuse and indecency on a number of children who attended the school.

Archbishop Wilson said the church's current inquiry into the processes in place during 1986 and 1991 was progressing well. After extensive interviews, all information was now in the hands of Mr Brian Hayes QC who had taken over from Mr Chris Kourakis QC following his appointment as solicitor general.

"All the information is now in Brian Hayes' hands and I await his report," he said.

Archbishop Wilson said he would consider all options including requesting the tabling of the report in Parliament. "If appropriate, I will seek discussion of this possibility with the Premier," he said.

"My intention is to fulfil the promises I made to these parents to investigate this and engage in Towards Healing. If they want to be involved in litigation, I totally recognise their right to do that," he said.

Archbishop Wilson said 13 St Ann's families were involved with the church's Towards Healing process, the church's protocol for dealing with complaints of abuse. "From the outset, many families have had contact with the church through the Catholic Education Office and similarly through the Towards Healing program," he said.

"The principles of Towards Healing have been in action from the very beginning and we've had extensive relationships with many families and provided counselling and transport as well as other assistance.

"The church is currently considering its response to these St Ann's families in light of today's development."

Vicar General Mgr David Cappelletti and Catholic Education director Allan Dooley have met parents on several occasions as well as parent advocacy groups. The Archbishop also met parents last year. The Catholic Education Office has made extra staff available for families.

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