

Salvos offer abuse redress

By MAIRI BARTON

THE victims of a paedophile who infiltrated the ranks of the Salvation Army and preyed on Perth boys for 15 years will be compensated by the Church.

The move came after retired Salvation Army major Charles Allan Smith, 65, was jailed yesterday for 15 years for sexually abusing nine boys aged between 10 and 17.

Smith pleaded guilty in Perth District Court to 39 charges, including indecent dealing, carnal knowledge and indecent assault.

Many of the offences were committed in the 1960s and 70s when he was a cottage parent at a Salvation Army home in Nedlands for wards of the State.

Smith, a father of two, was extradited to WA from Gravelly Beach in Tasmania in February.

Three of the victims, now men in their 40s, said outside the court their lives had been ruined and they were relieved to have the court case behind them after suffering in silence for years.

They said the Salvation Army had offered them counselling, but no compensation and they had not ruled out civil action.

But Salvation Army spokesman John Dalziel said the organisation would not put victims through that trauma. Compensation would be offered within six months.

Sheila Amsden, for Smith, said the Salvation Army had failed its moral obligations by putting Smith in a position of trust over boys.

He had been perverted and corrupted by sexual abuse as a child and he developed a homosexual relationship with a Salvation Army officer after he joined aged 27.

He raised concerns about the relationship and his childhood abuse with his commanding officer in the early 1960s, but was offered no counselling and told nothing more would be said about it.

He was dismissed from the Salvation Army in 1974 after receiving a good-behaviour bond for child molestation. But he was reinstated in 1979.

Mr Dalziel said the Salvation Army was horrified by the case.

Chief Judge Kevin Hammond described Smith as a dominant man and a true paedophile who had preyed about young boys and used them as sexual playthings.

He said it was not his role to judge the Salvation Army.

The sentence was backdated to Smith's arrest in February. He was made eligible for parole.