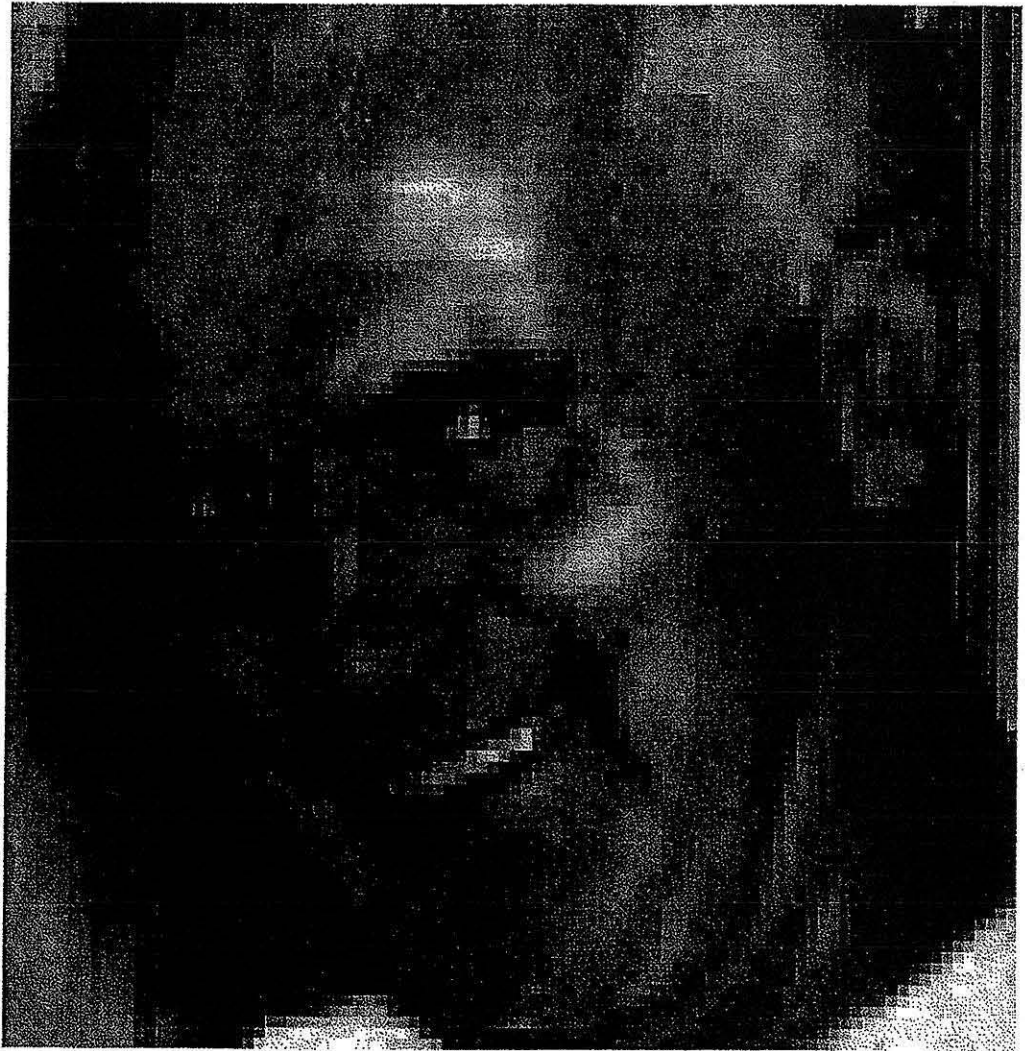


Pedophile priest victim calls for church inquiry

By JOANNE McCARTHY
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PREDATOR: Priest Denis McAlinden.

A **PROMINENT** Hunter businesswoman sexually abused by notorious Hunter pedophile priest Denis McAlinden had one message yesterday for the Catholic Church that knew of the offending but failed to alert authorities.

"I hope they rot in hell," she said after The Herald revealed documents showing "the good of the church" and McAlinden's "good name" were priorities as the church tried to force him from the priesthood, while the welfare of his child victims did not rate a word.

"It's unbelievable. I'm just dumbfounded. What did they feel, if anything, for the victims?" the woman said.

Other victims, victims' rights groups, and the Australian Lawyers Alliance called for a police investigation into why the Church did not report the "many allegations" about McAlinden to police, and for a broader national inquiry into the Church's handling of child sex abuse cases.

Others questioned whether revelations about his role in the secret attempt to defrock McAlinden would hasten Maitland-Newcastle Bishop Michael Malone's early retirement. Bishop Malone did not respond to Herald inquiries yesterday.

Lake Macquarie Police Detective Inspector Dave Waddell said police were reviewing The Herald's documents and "if there's an investigation or alleged offence that needs to be pursued, it will be".

Australian Lawyers Alliance spokesman Dr Andrew Morrison SC said his group strongly supported an inquiry.

Anyone who knew of serious crimes by clergy but failed to report them to police should be held accountable, he said.

Church abuse victim support group Broken Rites said the case showed the need for a government-appointed judicial inquiry because "McAlinden was no Robinson Crusoe".

"Broken Rites has researched many cases around Australia in which Church authorities harboured known offenders for many years," spokesman Dr Bernard Barrett said.

Survivors' group Crusaders NSW likewise supported calls for an independent, transparent investigation with powers to subpoena documents and call witnesses.

"The Church hierarchy has shown it can't 'face the music' so an inquiry is now called for," a spokesman said.

The woman whose formal statement in 1995 to **REDACTED** prompted the secret attempt to defrock McAlinden described the Church's actions as a cover-up.

"How dare Michael Malone say he wouldn't comment on McAlinden because he

was dead and had no right of reply," the woman said.

"The message there is let him rest in peace, it's all over and done with now, but it's not.

"This needs to be investigated by police. There needs to be a full inquiry into the Church in Australia. For too long the Church has had its brotherhood where they cover for each other, but too many people are hurting now, and it's not just the victims."