

# Plea from a grave

Eric Joseph McGuinness, in a statement read at his funeral yesterday, called for establishment of an Aboriginal political party.

The call came in a report he prepared as director of the Aborigines' Advancement League but which he never delivered.

He was to have read it at the league's annual general meeting next week. But he died in Adelaide on Monday, from a heart attack, at the age of 42.

Pastor David Kirk read it for him at his funeral service.

Mr. McGuinness was one of Australia's best known Aboriginal leaders.

He said black people needed their own party to contest Senate elections and they had to work with the ethnic community.

By MICHAEL ROBERTS

This was the only way they could win a bigger say in their own affairs.

More than 400 people, white and black, crowded into the Aborigines' Advancement League's hall in Northcote for the service.

Mrs. Margaret Briggs, a former director of the league, draped the red, black and yellow Aboriginal flag over the coffin.

Mr. McGuinness' brother, Bruce, a former Black Rights Senate candidate, rose to speak but was overcome with emotion and had to set down.

Pastor Kirk, Federal secretary of the Aboriginal Evangelical Fel-

lowship, said Mr. McGuinness' life had been one of real struggle.

"He was a true battler," he said.

Like all leaders, he had not escaped criticism and mistrust but was prepared to play his part in spite of it.

Pastor Kirk said Mr. McGuinness would have wanted every Aborigine present at the service to attend the advancement league's meeting next week.

"I trust that you will find yourself there," Pastor Kirk said.

"There is what I call Aboriginal apathy towards their own welfare as well as white apathy in this country.

"Here is an opportunity to come forward."

Mr. McGuinness was buried at the Fawcner cemetery.