‘On Being Very Visible’:
Rollie Busch as a Public Theologian

William W. Emilsen

Theology is alive only at the cutting edge between the Word and the world.¹

M. M. Thomas

If you are going to be proclaiming the gospel of reconciliation in Jesus Christ, the degree to which you can give visible recognition of that in the life and faith of the church is the degree to which your mission will be more effective.²

‘Rollie’ Busch

Rolland (‘Rollie’) Arthur Busch died suddenly of a heart attack (myocardial infarction) on 19 July 1985, aged 64, less than three months after laying down the office of President of Australia’s third largest church, the Uniting Church in Australia. Still some twenty years later there are gnawing questions, and not a little soul searching in the Church over his early death.³ Did the Uniting Church ask too much of its third President? Were his numerous roles – Principal, Professor, President, to name a few, and manifold responsibilities too many for this seemingly ‘indestructible and evergreen man’? Was Rollie Busch worked to death? Or, as is sometimes expressed in candid asides, did he work himself to death?⁴

Both observations are true, but not the whole truth. It is easy to blame the Church and the pressures of work for Busch’s untimely death for his letters are replete with wry comments about demanding ‘presidential duties’, constant travelling, and overcrowded diary looking ‘like nothing on earth with scarcely a moment to breathe’.⁵ At the end of his term as President, Busch was tired and ‘fidgety’⁶ and warned his successor, Ian Tanner, of the ‘tremulous years’ ahead.⁷ It is even easier to censure Busch

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¹ Quoted by Busch in ‘Kingdom and Power’ (Address delivered at Busch’s installation at President of the Third Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia), Life and Times, 26 May, 1982, p. 2. I have yet to identify the exact source of the quotation but almost the same words are to be found among Thomas’ “Criteria of a Living Theology” in his The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance, Madras, C.S. 2nd ed, 1976, p. 312.
⁵ Carolyn Craig-Emilsen, Interview with Olive Collett, 28 June 2004; William Emilsen, Interview with Han Spykerboer, 30 June 2004; William Emilsen, Interview with Rhonda Richards, 8 December 2007.
himself for his self-imposed busyness. Despite repeated warnings from close friends and colleagues to slow down, he pushed himself to the limit. He was a 'workaholic'. He extolled 'the dignity of work' imbibed in him by his Lutheran heritage. He slept little, arrived at the office early, and worked late. He took on too much and relinquished too little. Over and above the demanding responsibilities of being President of the Uniting Church's Assembly (though they were not as full then as they are today), Busch continued on as Principal of Trinity Theological College, lecturing in New Testament, and accepting a myriad of other invitations and responsibilities, including a period in 1984 when he was Acting Director of the Department for Education and Communication in the Queensland Synod. As Principal of Trinity College during his term as President, Busch was instrumental in the development of the Brisbane College of Theology and he continued to involve himself in the Settlements Committee and the Council of Synod's Lay Education Training. He maintained his active association with the Australian Council of Churches and the Australian Defence Force. He taught John's Gospel to Aboriginal church leaders at Nungalinya College in Darwin, lectured in bioethics in the Department of Nursing at the Queensland Institute of Technology and in professional ethics to final year nursing students at the Mater Misericordiae Public Hospital, Raymond Terrace, South Brisbane. He made regular appearances on the ABC's Journal of Religion and wrote columns for the Sunday Mail, the St John Ambulance News Centre and the Preachers' Digest. He also wrote short pieces for synod magazines such as the Northern Synod's Crucible, scholarly articles for St Mark's Review and Trinity Occasional Papers, and produced a substantial discussion book on new developments in biomedical science for the Assembly Commission on Social Responsibility's series, 'Issues of the Eighties'.

Busch's workload was extraordinary by any standard. His busyness, however, can not simply be attributed to an addictive personality type, but rather to a deep-seated theological conviction that the Church and its individual members should be 'visible' in, what the American theologian David Tracy has identified as, the three 'publics': society, the academy, and the Church. Busch was what is now popularly described as a 'public theologian'. In other words, he believed that the public face of the church mattered, through its leadership and in its mission, visibility mattered. The first President of the Uniting Church, Davis McCaughey, discerned as much in his inaugural Rollie Busch Memorial Lecture in 1989 when he stated that 'Rolle Busch... bequeathed to us a formidable task: how to live in and think about the

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7 William Emison, Interview with Ian Gillman, 29 June 2004.
8 'Statement on Night of Installation as President, Third Assembly UCA', FL, BP, Box 62.
9 He was convener of the Assembly Defence Force Chaplaincy Committee and he was the Uniting Church's representative on the Religious Advisory Committee to the Services.
10 He was also a member of the Ethics Committee of Wesley Hospital in Brisbane and a chaplain to the Order of St Lazarus.
world as it is in Australia at the end of the 20th century. Duncan Harrison, a former Moderator and General Secretary of the Queensland Synod, expressed the same idea to the author in slightly different terms: "[T]here is a totality about his whole being...[Busch] was involved in bio-ethics, he was involved in the army, he was involved in training nurses, he was involved in theological education, [and] he was involved in the politics of Church life."  

Apart from two minor pieces, a memorial collection of essays in *Trinity Occasional Papers*, and a memorial lecture in his honour, very little has been written on the career of Rollie Busch. Yet, he is certainly deserving of a full-scale biography, not least because he rose from a humble 'telegraph boy' to a place of leadership in the life of the church and the nation.²⁹ In 2001 Noel Wallis produced *A Man Called 'Rollie'* which consists of a laudatory essay on Busch's life appended to a short but idiosyncratic collection of Busch's writings. The other piece, 'Rolland Arthur Busch (1920–1985) Church leader, Christian educationalist, Army chaplain, and Bio-ethicist' is shorter but more scholarly. It was written by Angus Edmonds, a former Principal of Emmanuel College at the University of Queensland and stems from research he did for an entry on Busch for the most recent volume of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.³⁰ The essay was published in the June 2002 issue of *Fiat Lux*, the newsletter of Emmanuel College. Though Edmonds' essay, as the sub-title indicates, seeks to present Busch's broad range of interests, neither he nor Wallis pay much attention to Busch's years as President of the Uniting Church which is the particular focus of this essay.³¹

On 20 May 1982, the day before Busch was installed as President of the Uniting Church at the Third Assembly in Adelaide, he preached a sermon called 'On Being Very Visible' at a national consultation on disaster ministries held at Nulla Nulla, Belair, in South Australia. The sermon draws on I Corinthians 11:17 and 12:27 where the apostle Paul reminds his readers that the Church is not an invisible reality that somehow exists over against and apart from the people who are members or adherents of local parishes. 'No', says Busch in agreement, 'you are the body of Christ, and when you come together you

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³⁰ There is ample source material for a biography in the 110 boxes and 10 parcels of the R. A. Busch Papers in the Fryer Library at the University of Queensland. There is also considerable manuscript material in the Trinity Theological College Library in Brisbane and in the archives of the Queensland State Library, the Mitchell Library in Sydney, the Presbyterian Church in Queensland, and the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia.


³² Wallis is explicit and not a little self-revealing on this matter when he states: 'All the administrative business and President's pastoral visits to Parishes during the three years in that office are [sic] not the subject of this part of the story. Whilst Rollie was very active in these areas of office, endorsing himself to so many within and outside his denomination, the details of this might be too tedious for the average reader, and can be found, of course, in the Minute Books and reports of the Uniting Church' (p. 44). Likewise, Edmonds' interests are elsewhere, citing only the dates of Busch's presidency.
are very visible warts and all. Busch concludes his sermon with an appeal for the Church to be very visible in the community. 'On Being Very Visible' stands like an epigram to Busch's presidency. He would preach it many times over the next three years, at meetings of synods and in parishes around the nation.

The desire for the Church to be 'visible' or public runs like a continuous thread throughout Busch's writings and it provides an important key to understanding his approach to ministry and his role as President of the Uniting Church. The first indication of Busch's commitment to the public sphere is to be found in his earliest writings, two theses (a BA (Hons) and a MA in philosophy from the University of Queensland) both on the eighteenth-century Anglican divine, Bishop Joseph Butler (1692–1752). Butler's moral teachings, especially in his Fifteen Sermons (1726) and his 'Dissertation on Virtue' which was published as an appendix to the chapter 'On the Moral Government of God' in his famous Anatomy of Religion (1736), were a major factor in shaping Busch's approach to society and the study of ethics. What emerged from Butler's writings for Busch was the idea of the interdependence of the private and the public good. Following Butler, Busch insisted that the individual and the community were not sharply separated, rather the former was an integral part of the latter and that the true end of the individual was to promote a 'virtuous community'. Such teaching, according to Busch, resonated well with the saying of Jesus in Luke's gospel, 'For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it' (9:24).

In the 1960s and early 70s there is clear evidence of the German theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's influence on Busch's understanding of the visible church. Like many other theologians of the period – Peter Berger, Pierre Berton, Harvey Cox and Mark Gibbs to name a few of the more popular ones – Busch was attracted to Bonhoeffer's call for involvement in the affairs of the world and railed against

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25 See Fl, BP, Box 110, Folder 1.
27 Busch, The Authority of Conscience, Preface; Busch, Conscience and the Good Will, pp. 12, 68.
29 R. A. Busch, Conscience and the Good Will, p. 62.
'fossilised religion'.64 These exponents of secular Christianity were, in Busch's opinion, a healthy corrective to the 'ghetto mentality' that pervaded the churches in the preceding decade.65

There is justice in the claim that for too long "secular" has been contrasted with "sacred" in a way that divorces God from his creation... It is a good thing to be reminded that Christianity must be worldly in the right sense before it can be missionary in any sense. For the ministry of Jesus was a public ministry in every sense. It was in the workaday world, rather than in temple or synagogue, that we find him teaching, healing, fellowshipping, dying. He sent his followers into the world to be as "salt" and "light". It is in the world that our Risen Lord is still at work, and it is there that he would have his disciples join him.66

Of course, in his desire for the church to be visible in the affairs of society, Busch was not unaware of the dangers of the church itself becoming secularised. Too often, he believed, Christians danced around issues such as '[u]rbanisation, civil rights, ecology and pollution' as though they were 'golden calves' without really listening for the redemptive word in that situation and without really responding graciously.67 Busch was committed to the notion that the church be a 'reconciling community' and urged the church to constantly wrestle with how it gave visible expression to their fellowship in the ordinary business of everyday life.68

Visibility for Busch was a profoundly serious moral and theological principle which guided everything he did and said. In the debates over church union in the 1960s, Busch argued that there was an urgent need for practical and visible unity so that the world may understand and the young may be enthused.69 In the field of religious education, where Busch particularly excelled, he translated this philosophical commitment into a pedagogical one. For example, he constantly reminded religious educators that true

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66 R. A. Busch, 'Obedience in Change: Five Questions for the Church', (Being the occasional address delivered to the 125th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland at its opening sedentum in St Paul's Presbyterian Church, Mackay, 7 May 1972), unpublished manuscript, [1972], p. 8, TCL.

67 R. A. Busch, 'Obedience in Change: Five Questions for the Church', (Being the occasional address delivered to the 125th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland at its opening sedentum in St Paul's Presbyterian Church, Mackay, 7 May 1972), unpublished manuscript, [1972], p. 9, TCL.

68 R. A. Busch, 'Church Unity Is A Growing Thing', St Lucia, May 1969, in Plain Speaking, unpublished manuscript, [n.d.], p. 20, TCL.

69 R. A. Busch, 'Church Unity Is A Growing Thing', p. 20.
education extolled a sense of purpose in individuals that was service-oriented and community-related. In mission, too, Busch was equally adamant: ‘If God matters’, protested Busch against those who claimed that the Church had no place in business, politics and international affairs, ‘then he matters to every department of human life — economics, justice, racial equality, peace — as much as in the Church and in personal salvation.’ It was also incumbent on Christians, Busch believed and exhibited in his own person, to be at the centres of power such as government, business, industry, military establishments, media, labour, even the churches themselves, leavening the whole lump. He taught elders to be active in the community and to permeate every corner of society with Christian ideals. He reminded chaplains in the Australian Defence Force of the need to be worldly before they could be missionary, and he urged theologians to become involved with real issues that affected society. All forms of Christian ministry and mission were for Busch part of the visible ministry of Jesus Christ and for the world and the effectiveness of that ministry and mission was determined by the extent to which they gave visible recognition to the gospel of reconciliation.

When Busch was nominated as President-elect at the 1979 Assembly, a former General Secretary described him as a ‘dark horse’, indicating that there was an element of general surprise at Busch’s nomination. While it is true that Busch did not have the eccumenical experience of his two predecessors, Davis McCAughney and Winston O’Reilly — both key figures in bringing the Uniting Church into being — he had been Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Queensland (1972–73) and twice Moderator of the Queensland Synod of the Uniting Church (1977–79). So, perhaps the surprise arose from a southern prejudice about Queensland in the Bjelke-Peterson era: Can anything good come out of Queensland? Whatever the reasons, Busch came with admirable credentials. Not only had he been a Moderator of a State synod, a common stepping-stone to the presidency, he had earned a good reputation as Principal of Emmanuel College (1961–78), his work as Chaplain General of the Australian Military Forces (1977–81) gave him standing in other synods, his contribution to

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38 R. A. Busch, ‘Education and the Personal Life’ (Being the Occasional Address delivered at the service of Dedication for Teachers, held in Lismore Presbyterian Church, on Tuesday, 19th February, 1963) (published in The Leader: A Journal for Principals and Inspectors by the Department of Education, No. 1, 1964) in Education for Redemption: Essays in Christian Education, unpublished manuscript, [nd], p. 126, TTCL; see also R. A. Busch, ‘Crowd or Community, in Fait Luc: The Church and Its Educational Institutions, unpublished manuscript, [nd], p. 71, TTCL.

39 R. A. Busch, ‘Christian Mission in Today’s World’, (Being an Address Delivered to Brisbane Methodist Synod meeting at Ashgrove — July, 1966) in Plain Speaking, unpublished manuscript, [nd], pp. 11–12, TTCL.


41 R. A. Busch, ‘Presbyterian Church of Queensland Elders’ Seminary’ (Synopsis of Lectures Delivered to Elders on Several Occasions from 1960–1983) in Essays Catholic and Critical, unpublished manuscript, [nd], p. 60, TTCL.


43 R. A. Busch, ‘The Theology of Revolution’ (Being an Introduction to Articles by George Celestin, Jan Lockmann, Richard Sheaull, and Roland Smith in New Theology (Number 6), prepared for the Brisbane Theology Study Group, 4 June 1970) in Essays Catholic and Critical, unpublished manuscript, [nd], p. 72, TTCL.

theological education as Principal of Trinity was well regarded⁴⁶, and most importantly, his courageous and statesman-like leadership during the ‘takeover’ of the Aruksun and Mornington Island Aboriginal communities by the Queensland Government in 1978 catapulted him to national prominence. It is no exaggeration to suggest that Busch was the most visible person in the Uniting Church in the two years following Church Union. If the Uniting Church was looking for its third President from a synod other than Victoria or New South Wales, then Queensland being the next populous State was the obvious choice, and if it were to be a Queenslander, then Busch was the standout candidate.

Busch was installed as President of the Third Assembly of the Uniting Church in Wesley Church, Kent Town, Adelaide on 21 May, 1982. His address on that occasion was called ‘Kingdom and Power’, based on the text in Luke 24: 28, ‘You are witnesses of these things’. At first sight this sermon is more dense and theological than ‘On Being Very Visible’, the sermon he had given the previous day at Nunyara. Nevertheless, the text and the sermon itself continue the theme of visibility. There Busch warns his listeners (and subsequently his readers of the published version) how the church’s very busyness of looking after its own affairs can often obscure the church’s real business of witnessing to the crucified and ascended Christ. Christians are to be ‘visible signs of God’s presence’ in society. It can only do this by demonstrating redemptive love in word and action by becoming involved with the problems and the needs of human life.⁴⁷

It does not come as a great surprise that Busch quotes from the Indian theologian and ecumenical leader, M. M. Thomas, in this sermon. After all, Busch and his wife, Mavis, had spent seven weeks in Tamil Nadu the previous year and were greatly impressed with the spirituality and vitality of the Church of South India there: reaching out into the community through slum clearance, flood relief, self-help schemes for the unemployed, medical and social services to the poor, care for orphans and the destitute aged, street evangelism, and teaching missions. What is surprising is that Busch repeats exactly the same words in his closing address three years later. The words that bracketed Busch’s presidency were: ‘Theology is alive only at the cutting edge between the Word and the world; they expressed Busch’s abiding belief that the church’s proclamation and participation in society need to be both credible and visible.⁴⁸

Unlike the first two Assemblies, which of necessity were preoccupied with the nuts and bolts of forming a new church, the Third Assembly, arguably one of the most controversial, if not the most controversial in the Church’s brief history, marked a significant turning point in the life of the infant Church. To Busch’s credit he involved the young and the disaffected by not being too legalistic about the Orders of Debate (despite the concerns of some Victorian delegates) and steered the Assembly with good humour through a minefield of emotive issues. These included the exclusion of militaristic hymns

⁴⁶ Interview with Ian Gillman, 29 June 2004.
⁴⁷ R. A. Busch, ‘Kingdom and Power’ (Being the Address delivered to the Third Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia on the occasion of his being installed as its President, at its opening session in Wesley Church, Kent Town (SA), at 8 p.m. on Friday 21 May 1982), FL, BP, Box 107, Folder 2. Reprinted as ‘Kingdom and Power’ in Life and Times, 26 May, 1982, p. 2.
from the hymnbook, the abolition of cadets in schools, the nature of the diaconate, the ordination of homosexuals, rebaptism in charismatic congregations, ministerial settlements, disarmament, Assembly structures review, the church and the welfare state, and the Uniting Church’s involvement (or non-involvement) in the bicentennial celebrations. His major achievement, however, was to help the church to think of itself as a national church committed to one mission in all its various facets. For instance, after the Assembly, Alan Crawford, Moderator of the Victorian Synod, wrote to thank Busch for his ‘message of unity and purpose in mission’ and also for the way he ‘laid it on the line’ to the Assembly that the Uniting Church was an ‘Australian Church’, not, the implication being, several commissions and seven synods working separately. Inasmuch as a President can make a significant contribution, many other participants agreed that Busch had offered clear leadership and helped the Assembly develop a visible identity and a national outlook that hitherto did not exist.48

Less than a month after Busch was installed as President of the Assembly, he admitted to David Merritt, Executive Director of the Council for Christian Education, that there was one concern above all others that he wanted to pursue during his term of office, that is, to develop greater cooperation between the various commissions of the Assembly.49 He was concerned with how the commissions tended to operate independently of each other and how they often duplicated one another’s efforts. The diverse structures and systems of management and the unequal distribution of funds within the commissions had arisen because they tended to reflect the distinctive patterns and traditions of their predecessor denomination. Busch was also concerned with how the commissions sometimes spoke with a divided voice on controversial issues like Aboriginal land rights, one commission, for example being sympathetic with Aboriginal justice, another with the rights of mining companies. Furthermore, while the structures of the synods had received considerable attention, those of the Assembly had been ignored. It was out of concerns such as these that pressure for a review of the Assembly’s structures was generated.50

The Assembly Structure Review Committee, comprising six members and assisted by a management consultant from W. D. Scott & Co.,51 released its interim report in March 1983. The report not only contained the necessary practical recommendations for bringing about the structural reform that Busch, David Gill, the General Secretary, and others were calling for, it also contained the unmistakable mark of Busch’s desire for the Assembly to be more visible within the community. For example, among the seven features identified in the report as being of concern, the third could almost have been a direct response to Busch’s sermon ‘On Being Very Visible’:

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49 M. Sawyer to R. A. Busch, 31 October 1984, FL, BP, Box 13, Book 75.
50 R. A. Busch to D. Merritt, 7 June 1982, FL, BP, Box 22, File: Council for Christian Education.
51 R. A. Busch to D. Black, 30 October 1984, FL, BP, Box 13, Vol. 76.
52 The six members were Winston O’Reilly/Rollie Busch (ex-officio), Morris Williams, Joan Sluse, Frank Butler, Ron Sparks and Ron Wilson. Butler was convener but Busch chaired the meetings. Edward Hutchinson was the management consultant.
the need for a more visible leadership of the national Church – both publicly and within the Church. Of course there is no hard evidence that the above item was inserted at Busch's request (though he had proved himself a skilled and wily drafter of regulations in the Queensland Synod), the circumstantial evidence, however, is very compelling that it comes from Busch himself. Firstly, Busch chaired the Committee. Secondly, it is difficult to imagine the Review Committee making recommendations in addition to those for structural change that called for the President to be able to take a much more visible leadership role without Busch's tacit approval. Thirdly, it is virtually inconceivable that the almost episcopal language of 'visibility' could be used explicitly to define two of the six proposed roles of the President without Busch's prior agreement: the President is the 'visible symbol of the Church in Australia'; the President should 'be visible at national bodies of the Church and, as possible, at other levels also.'

Busch was not opposed to the inter-related conciliar processes that were adopted by the Uniting Church at Union but he was concerned with the way they could be used to suppress effective leadership and the mission of the Church, be it in the Assembly, synods or local congregations. His natural inclinations were with the more hierarchical structures that he had known and loved in the army.

Busch interpreted the mission of the church largely in terms of visibility or being a 'sign of the new creation'. Mission for him was what the church did when it moved outside its doors and homes. It was the redemptive work that Christians did with people outside the church. He saw the ordained ministry as a public commitment and a commitment to the public. He condemned those ministers who took their congregations along the path of the 'inward journey' without addressing the great public issues of the day. He often referred to Penny Lernoux's *Cry of the People*, a moving and dramatic account of what was happening to the church in Latin America, as evidence of a visible, vital and growing church even in the face of persecution and martyrdom. Reconciliation in society, he averred, may require

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51 W. D. Scott, 'Report on Overview of Findings and Recommendations', p. 14, C 1984, FL, BP, Box 9. The others were the low profile of the Assembly and its activities as seen by the Uniting Church in Australia; the power of an Assembly voice who can speak on nation-wide issues; the need for an Assembly to make a statement about a declaration of conflicting attitudes by leaders in different parts of the Church; the apparent overlaps in the mandates and responsibilities of the Assembly, synod and the Assembly sector; the considerable number of respondents who considered there was a need for greater association of mission agencies; a widespread concern about the quality of communication within the Church – but with a great diversity of views where the communication problems occurred and why.


53 W. D. Scott, 'Report on Overview of Findings and Recommendations', p. 44, c. 1964, FL, BP, Box 9. W. D. Scott, 'Interim Report of Assembly Structures Review Committee to the Assembly Standing Committee', p. 44, March 1983, FL, BP, Box 15. The other roles were: Chairman of Assembly and Standing Committee; Pastor of the Church; Counsellor to the Assembly Secretary; Ultimate responsibility, after such consultation as may be appropriate, to deal with any emergency at the Assembly level, italics mine.

54 R. A. Busch, 'Speech on the Uniting Church in Australia', 10 October 1984, FL, BP, Box 110, Folder 1.


57 R. A. Busch to J. Major, 20 August 1984, FL, BP, Box 22, File: Commission on Evangelism.
risk-taking on the part of the church. 'My own experience these past few years', Busch told the Fourth Assembly in his closing address, 'is that the grace of God comes like manna in the wilderness when we have the courage to commit ourselves to being faithful to God's purpose through living in and engaging with the world.'

During Busch's term of office there were many public issues that engaged his attention. Chief among these were defending the Uniting Church against scurrilous articles in the Bulletin and the Torsak Times, staving off attacks against the Uniting Church's involvement in the World Council of Churches, negotiating with the Australian Mining Industry Council over Aboriginal land rights, advocating the rights of Queensland electricity workers, condemning racism and racist attitudes towards Asians among Federal parliamentarians and, in response to a plea from the National Farmers' Federation, issuing an urgent call to all Uniting Church congregations to pray for rain on Christmas Day during the height of the 1982 drought. But the one achievement that particularly pleased him was the formation of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. Although Busch was very aware of the dangers of the Congress developing a theology at variance with that of the Uniting Church's largely through the attractions of Pentecostalism, and of the serious possibility of urban Aboriginals dominating the interests of those in the rural communities, he, nonetheless, was a tireless advocate for Aboriginal rights from his student days and for the Congress itself from its beginnings in August 1982 to its official recognition at the 1985 Assembly. Congress, he believed, was an eye opener, a visible demonstration to the Uniting Church and to the Australian community that 'God's power ... [was] not limited to one language and one culture only'. Congress, together with the emerging multicultural congregations within the Uniting Church, was 'a sign of hope' to the Australian nation, particularly to those who were marginalised on the grounds of race, culture and class. However challenging and frustrating the Church's advocacy on behalf of Congress was and may continue to be, its very presence provided 'a glorious opportunity' to set before the Australian community a model of black-white relationships.

Rollie Busch may have vehemently opposed any attempt to sanctify him. He may even have had mixed feelings about the splendid military funeral held in his honour, with his coffin and medals bestowed on a gun carriage preceded by church dignitaries and a cortege of 500 soldiers. It was, after all, the largest funeral the streets of Brisbane had witnessed for decades; it was also a street-march that not even Joh Bjelke-Petersen could possibly ban. And yet, his death was consistent with his life — public, colourful and extremely visible. He may, too, have been slightly embarrassed by his broadcaster friend, Florence Spurling's description of him as a 'valorous knight' but her lyrical tribute published in Trinity Occasional Papers shortly after his death, with its emphasis on the visual, captures the very core of what was central to Rollie Busch's life and ministry:

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68 R. A. Busch, 'Presidents report', 1985, Fl, BP, Box 110, Folder 1.
69 R. A. Busch, 'God, Culture and The Letter to the Romans', p. 9, Fl, BP, Box 110, Folder 1.
70 R. A. Busch to Djinyini Gondarra, 17 October 1984, Fl, BP, Box 20, File: Moderators (Blue).
71 R. A. Busch to B. Clarke, 28 March 1984, Fl, BP, Box 23, File: CWYM — Aboriginal and Islander Congress. For his ongoing commitment to the Indigenous people's struggle for justice, the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress made him an honorary member in 1985.
Rollie Busch was a knight.

A glorious and brave man who was prepared to die for love.

The heart of a knight is valorous, unstinting, large, generous.

His love for Christ, for people, and for individuals was a vivid colour within the life of the Australian community; it was the flash of a glorious bird winging nobly through a forest of fainter hues.

To experience Rollie Busch was to experience a sense of chivalry. Chivalry in the sense of great feelings and values being of more importance than selfish, petty claims of power or comfort.

To enter Rollie's presence was to enter a large and lovely space where colour and vitality offered new ease and new possibilities.⁴