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**Message delivered by Dr Price on UCT student accommodation and protests**

More than 75% of University of Cape Town students staying in residence are black, Vice-Chancellor Dr Max Price said today as he summarised UCT's progress in resolving the accommodation shortage that has been the focus of recent protests on campus led by the Rhodes Must Fall movement.

**Dr Price said about the protests:** "We have been, we believe, very supportive and tolerant of peaceful protest and we protect that always. The university is a place for discussion and debate and we jealously guard that. I think our track record of the last year of dealing with #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall protests has demonstrated that we have always been open and always made space for that. We draw the line at criminality and violence and that is what has happened last night, and that's why we have acted firmly and strongly."

**About claims that black students have been excluded from housing on campus:** "The #RhodesMustFall lobby claims that this issue is about student housing and in particular about black students not being given housing in residence in the university, and that white students have been given preference. I want to say that that is completely wrong. Firstly, if you just look at the figures: we have around 6600 beds in our residences and over 75% of them are allocated and currently occupied by black students, so the overwhelming majority is black students. Our residence admissions policy gives strong preference, very strong preference, to students on financial aid, because in general residence accommodation is a bit cheaper than [off-campus] private accommodation. Also, it gives preference to students who are very young, if they're not yet 18, for example. And it gives preference to people who come from outside of Cape Town because clearly it's more difficult for them."

**About the accommodation shortage at UCT this year:** "As you probably know, we have only got accommodation for about a quarter of our students; we have 27000 students, 6600 beds. So we cannot accommodate them all. We assist them by trying to find them off-campus accommodation and I can tell you we have found off campus accommodation for over 2000 students in addition to the over 6000 students that are on campus [in residence]. And we have been able to find accommodation for everyone who applied for accommodation and who was offered accommodation. There are some people who did not apply and arrived [at the residence office]; or some people who applied and were told we do not have accommodation and who have not yet been accommodated; and those are the students we have in temporary accommodation while we are helping them to look for accommodation."

There are about 50 students now in temporary accommodation. We are certainly hopeful and we intend to find accommodation for them too."

**About the role RMF played in aggravating the accommodation problem:** "Our difficulty in finding accommodation has largely been aggravated by the #RhodesMustFall protests because they invaded and shut down our residence offices for three days during the last week and this created additional complications.

**About the Shackville protest and disruptions it caused:** "The protest that began on Tuesday [actually it began on Monday, 15 February 2016] by the erection of a shack was a legitimate protest, one we thought was very clever and effective in fact, [it] made the point effectively. We had no problem with the fact of that protest. However, the shack was erected in the middle of the road that crosses the campus. It disrupted traffic. It meant that traffic backed up on the highways coming on to campus. It also prevented people from moving easily across the campus. There were also other illegal activities such as fires being made around the shack and people intimidating – #RhodesMustFall protesters intimidating – other students and staff who were walking past and trying to cross the campus. There were in fact two assaults by #RhodesMustFall protesters. We therefore offered and requested #RhodesMustFall to move the shack. We did not ask them to demolish it. The letter that we sent to them is on our [website](#). It made it clear that we had no problem with the protest, we wanted to move the shack roughly 20 to 30 metres from where it was: still very prominent on the Upper Campus, but not disruptive. We asked the students to move it and we said we would help them move it and we gave them five o'clock yesterday as the deadline."

**About protesters' response to requests to relocate the shack:** "They completely rejected that and in fact made a statement that if we were going to move it that there would be violence. We did not in fact initiate the movement or the demolition of the shack. Around five o'clock they mobilised a significant crowd of students. The students lighting fires and barricades, lighting tyres. They invaded the residences nearby. They invaded the kitchens and stole food and served food to people who were not meant to be in the residences. They intimidated people in the residences. They took out artworks and portraits from the residences and made a bonfire of these. And then they started moving around the campus to create fires elsewhere. We decided obviously to bring in our private security to try to contain them but it quickly became clear that we needed the public order policing services (POPS) and they were brought in, and in the next six to eight hours or so, they brought the situation under control. In the process there were further arson attacks. One of our buses was burnt, another one was damaged, a police vehicle was torched, another small vehicle of ours was burnt and there was a petrol bomb thrown into an office in this administration building [Bremner]; it was the Vice-Chancellor's office. The damage was fortunately contained in that office."

**About the current situation:** "The situation now is that we have restored order. The campus is open. All lectures are continuing. The mess has largely been cleared up. Those we have identified as students [who were involved in illegal behaviour] have been suspended. In a previous statement I said eight people were suspended; two of them it have turned not to be registered this year so that would be six who have been suspended. And police arrested eight people – we don't know who they are; so we don't know if there is any overlap. We have laid charges with the police as well as disciplinary charges for the acts of criminality. We hope that students will recognise that is not an acceptable form of protest and that they will not align themselves with this and that they will recognize that they put their futures at risk: certainly they risk expulsion if they participate in such criminal processes."

**ENDS**

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