

Vice-Chancellor's Circular on the Recent Water Crisis and Next Steps

The Vice-Chancellor wishes to thank everyone who joined the protest march yesterday. It was gratifying to see students, academic and support staff and concerned citizens uniting in their outrage over an intolerable situation.

I sincerely thank students for their great fortitude and spirit in dealing with the water crisis, the wardens, subwardens and house committees for their leadership during this difficult time, and all the support staff for their contribution in keeping students and staff supplied with water.

The march has had some positive results. Most importantly, the water is flowing again to the residences and other buildings. There was extensive media coverage on the water crisis and protest march. The Minister of Higher Education and Training has taken up the matter with relevant cabinet ministers, and the Presidency contacted us to assure us that the matter would receive attention.

However, this is not the time for complacency. We need to critically reflect on how we have dealt with the water crisis: what we did well, what we did not do so well, what else we could perhaps have done, learn lessons and ensure that we are well-equipped to deal with any future water crises.

To this effect, I have with immediate effect appointed two Special Assistants to lead us in such critical reflection and to produce a comprehensive plan for managing effectively any future water crises. The two Special Assistants are

- Dr Swantje Zschernack, who is an engineer and senior lecturer in the Human Kinetics & Ergonomics Department, and a long-serving House Warden of PPPP residence and also Hall Warden of Desmond Tutu Hall, and
- Mr John McNeill, senior lecturer in the Department of Information Systems, who has extensive knowledge on Rhodes and experience as House Warden of Winchester House and Hall Warden of Allan Webb Hall.

Dr Zschernack and Mr McNeill are tasked with bringing together relevant people, departments, offices and divisions within and outside Rhodes to:

- Critically reflect on the water crises of March and August 2013
- Critically analyse current plans, interventions and activities to date
- Produce a comprehensive plan for managing effectively any future water crises, including strategies to be employed, actions to be taken and clear delineation of the responsibilities of various people departments, offices and divisions
- Make proposals on immediate, short-term, medium-term and long terms interventions to minimise risk and ensure water security at Rhodes University
- Oversee whatever immediate interventions need to be taken to minimise risk and ensure greater water security at Rhodes

I invite all interested parties to forward any ideas, comments, advice and proposals that you may have to Dr Zschernack and Mr McNeill