



**REMARKS BY THE VICE-PRINCIPAL, PROFESSOR TAWANA KUPE,  
AT THE HANDOVER OF THE CHARLOTTE MAXEKE RESIDENCE  
7 SEPTEMBER 2017**

The Honourable MEC Jacob Mamabolo,

The Honourable Premier Mr David Makhura,

The Honourable Minister of Higher Education and Training Dr Blade Ndzimande,

Colleagues from Wits University and Friends,

I extend universal greetings to you all.

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to attend this ceremony this morning as it addresses accommodation - one of the key issues facing Wits University and other institutions in the higher education sector.

We understand that the need for adequate student accommodation is a national issue and we are therefore deeply appreciative to the province and the Ministry for making available this temporary facility, which will enable many students to live in a suitable environment as they complete their studies.

Our research has shown us that students who live in residences perform much better academically when compared to day students. This can be attributed in part to some of the support programmes in place in residences, but the assuredness and security of having a place at which to reside is also a major factor for success.

Wits University has about 6 150 beds available for students, but we would need to double our beds overnight to meet the full demand. If we had to undertake construction



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from scratch it would cost the University in the region of R3 billion over several years, which is not a feasible solution.

We are trying to expand our current residences as far as possible. We are currently expanding two residences on the Braamfontein West Campus which will result in more rooms from 2018 onwards. The extension of David Webster Hall of Residence began in February and will result in 113 new rooms come 2018. The extension of the Barnato Hall of Residence will result in 110 more beds once complete. But this will not solve the long-term challenge.

We are also exploring a series of strategic conversations with stakeholders to see how we can go to scale in addressing the accommodation problem.

The Campus Housing and Residence Life Unit is also exploring accrediting appropriate external service providers so that we can at least monitor and influence the external circumstances in which our students are housed.

Wits is a signatory to the Student Housing Initiative that the Province is instituting and has also engaged in other public-private partnerships to provide safe, affordable accommodation for students. The new Yale Village residence in Empire Road is an example of such a partnership. The University is increasingly using external service providers, including leasing to deal with the need for accommodation.

The University remains committed to doing all that it can to assist students in need as far as possible, but there is a need for a long-term accommodation strategy for the



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entire higher education sector. There is also a need for further conversations to take place around infrastructure development and transport systems in the City.

No one entity is able to address these challenges alone. There is a need for us all – the higher education sector, the province, the Ministry, the City and other sectors of society to collectively address the socio-economic inequalities of the past and the present. It is only through working together that we will be able to address the long-term challenge of accommodation that will ultimately be beneficial to our students, our University, our economy, our country and our continent.

Together, we can emerge stronger together.

Thank You