**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE RESOLVES TO HAVE A FOLLOW-UP MEETING WITH THE VAAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY**

**Parliament, Tuesday, 6 October 2020 –**The Portfolio Committee on Higher Education, Science and Technology today engaged with the Administrator of the Vaal University of Technology (VUT), Prof Ihron Rensburg, and other stakeholders from the university.

The purpose of the meeting was to assess progress in stabilising the university following the dissolution of the council and the appointment of the administrator by the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Dr Blade Nzimande, in August 2019.

The placement of the university under administration follows a report by a panel of independent assessors. Among the key findings of the Independent Assessors, are that the leadership, governance and management at VUT are in such a state of collapse that an intervention was necessary as provided in section 45 of the Higher Education Act, 1997, that there were widespread cases of maladministration, abuse of power, inconsistent and selective application of disciplinary measures, procurement irregularities, corruption relating to infrastructure projects, and other serious allegations.

The committee was further briefed by the administrator on other allegations from a whistle-blower that relate to the current period of administration, which includes the purchase of the Academia Student Residence, implementation of the SNG and independent assessors' report, alleged irregularities in the security and laptops tenders.

The committee welcomed the report of the administrator and noted the progress registered by Prof Rensburg in stabilising the university. The committee, however, was not satisfied with the responses by the university to the allegations raised by the whistle-blower.

The committee is of the view that that the administrator should be detailed in responding to the issues as opposed to providing a high-level summary.

The committee further felt that there is a need to comprehensively look at progress in implementing the recommendations of the independent assessors' report which was the basis for the appointment of the administrator, including implementation of the SNG forensic report.

In this regard the committee resolved to have a follow-up engagement with the administrator of VUT to receive detailed responses to the allegations as made by the whistle-blower, and to have a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of the independent assessors' report.

The committee further urged the university to finalise the appointment of a transitional interim SRC which must prepare for the democratic election of a full-time SRC. The term of the elected SRC came to an end and was subsequently disbanded in April 2020.  Up to date the university has not had a legitimate elected leadership of the students, a situation which the committee finds extremely unacceptable.

**ISSUED BY PARLIAMENTARY COMMUNICATION SERVICES ON BEHALF OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PORTFOLIO HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, MR PHILLY MAPULANE.**