

Anger as Zuma keeps mum on the Fees Commission report

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President Jacob Zuma is keeping mum on when he will make public the findings of the Fees Commission report into the feasibility of free education.



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The Presidency has ignored requests from various quarters, including numerous attempts from *TimesLIVE*, to find out when the report, which was completed almost two months ago, will be handed over to Parliament.

The delay has caused anxiety among tertiary students, and some from the University of Cape Town (UCT) planned to march to Parliament on Wednesday to demand that the report be released, as Finance Minister Malusi Gigaba delivers his mid-term policy budget statement.

Belinda Bozzoli, from the DA, said the president had held onto the report for "too long". She said the DA had written to the chairman of the portfolio committee on higher education and training to request that she compel the president or his representative, by means of a subpoena, to provide the report to members of the portfolio committee as a matter of urgency.

"The delay of the release of this report has far-reaching consequences," said Bozzoli. "Universities are unable to plan the 2018 academic year without knowing what their income will be. Students and their families are equally frustrated by Zuma's reluctance to release the report as it affects their futures."

On Wednesday, classes at UCT were brought to a standstill as a group of students disrupted tests and set off fire extinguishers and alarms. Many others were seen leaving the campus as the group made their way through campus.

UCT Student Representative Council president Seipati Tshabalala said students were assembling before leaving the campus to march on Parliament. "We have a plan of action," said Tshabalala. "We are shutting down. We cannot go back and forth. We will continue to shut down the entire campus."

On Monday, UCT vice-chancellor Max Price expressed grave concern that the president has not yet released the report, saying the uncertainty impacted on the ability of students and parents to plan financially for the next year.

"The failure to release the report also prevents stakeholders, including students and university councils, from responding to the proposals on the sustainable funding of higher education in SA and, in particular, on ensuring access for all who can benefit from it," Price said.

"We will not be able to delay decisions on fees for much longer. We therefore appeal to the president to release the report for public scrutiny and debate."

Source: BDpro

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