

Setting a Date

ON MONDAY, March 16th the university hosted a discussion entitled “Heritage, Signage and Symbolism” as part of a planned series of talks on transformation, which were planned last year. During the introduction given by Professor Crain Soudien, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Chair of the discussion, students requested that the order of speakers be rearranged so that Ramabina Mahapa, SRC President, could present

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his response first.

The request was granted and after Mahapa delivered his speech he, along with the majority of those present, left the room demanding that a date be set for when the statue would be removed. After the floor was opened to comments of whether or not the discussion should continue, it was decided that the discussion should be closed. Sally Titlestad, Spatial Historian and Heritage Management Consultant, commented that, should the decision be made to remove the statue, the university would still not be able to provide a date for the removal.

Titlestad noted the complexity of the issue and said that regardless of what the institution’s decision is, there will first need to be a “heritage impact assessment for the removal



full heritage impact assessment will need to be conducted

of a protected piece of property involving full public participation”. She then elaborated by saying that whilst this was procedure not always required, in this particular case it was made necessary “because there are so many stakeholders.

Titlestad said stakeholders such as funders, alumni, current students and staff, would all need to be consulted and participate in the process as they “care so much about the brand of UCT”. The large number of people who are required to have a say in the final decision of what happens to the statue means that a full heritage impact assessment will need to be conducted. Titlestad also said that people could be charged if they failed to follow that process.

Considering the process that

needs to be followed Titlestad said that a date could not be set, even provisionally, as the time taken to conduct these assessments varies. She raised the point that there are long waiting periods where “you put out notices and everyone gets a chance to comment back”. Those comments are then compiled and brought back, which is what makes it difficult to provide an exact timeline for when the statue will be removed.

Titlestad emphasised that although stakeholder engagement

is important, the ultimate decision to remove the statue will depend on the research done into the issue and “It will still rest on the recommendation of the heritage impact assessment”.

Titlestad also raised the example of the Cenotaph war memorial

“difficult to provide an exact timeline”

which was moved from Adderley Street, where it had been located since 1924, due to the addition of a MyCiti bus station. The process failed to consult stakeholders and this caused a delay in moving the memorial. Titlestad said that whether it is a demolition or relocation of the statue, it is still necessary to first conduct a heritage impact assessment.

After the discussion ended Dr Max Price, Vice-Chancellor, said that he could not provide a date for the statue’s removal as that decision had to be taken by the Council. Price said that a special council meeting would be called on May 20th in which a decision would be made on whether or not the statue would be removed, as well as other issues of transformation. However, on March 18th an e-mail was sent out stating that the meeting had been moved to April 15th. Price stated that the program to address transformation at UCT had been accelerated due to the student protests which have taken place since March 9th.