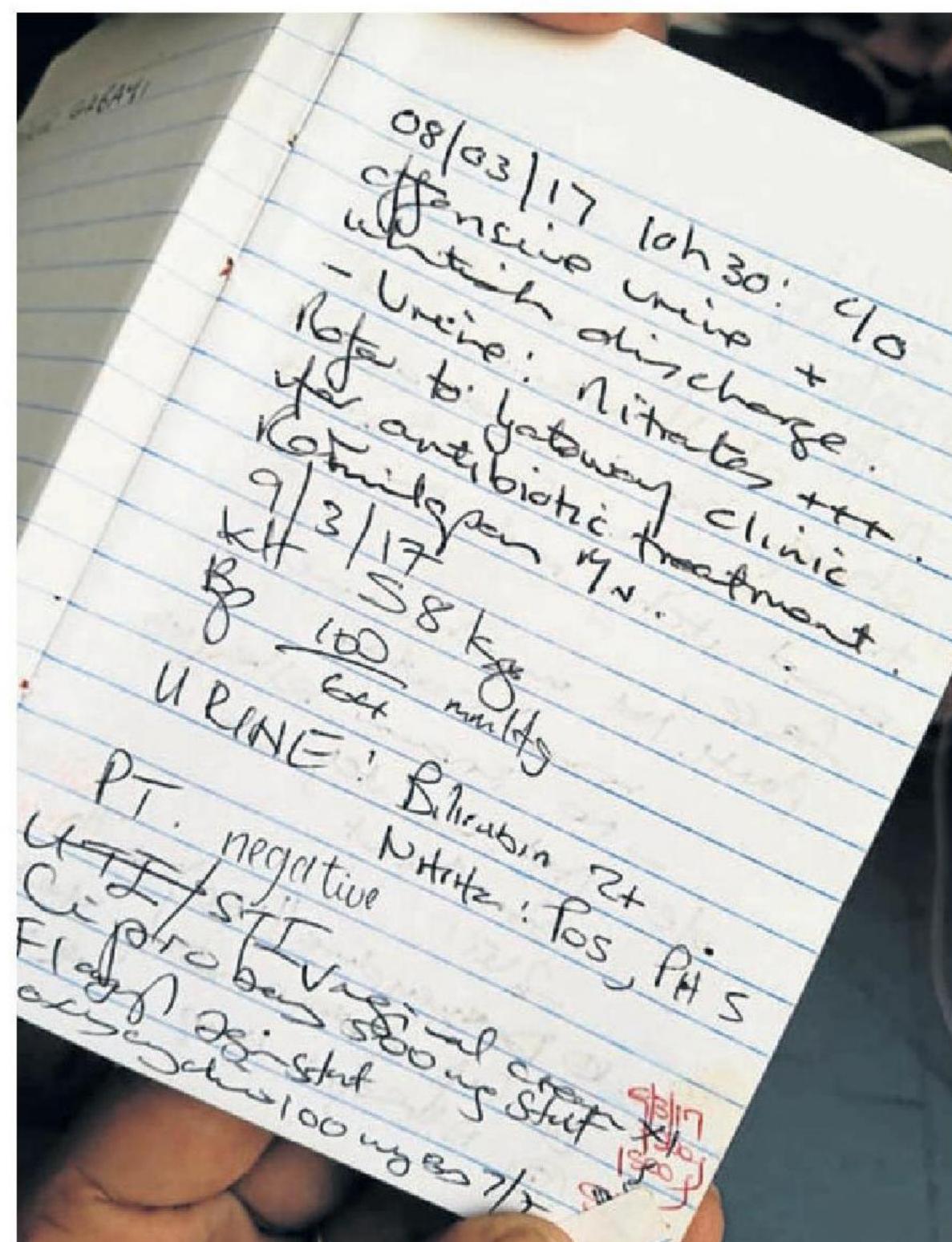
Students unhappy with residences



CRAMPED: Tourism management student Awethu Nduneni shares a toilet and bathtub with nine other students. Their beds are also not in a good condition. Picture: SINO MAJANGAZA





UNSANITARY CONDITIONS: The walls in the showers, left, are covered in mould. Right, a student's clinic book shows she was treated for a bacteria infection in her urinary tract. Pictures: ARETHA LINDEN

Small houses, high rent

SINO MAJANGAZA

Walter Sisulu University students fork out R3,400 for accommodation – sometimes in shoddy four-room houses – in Butterworth.

The dire shortage of student accommodation was again at the centre of student protests this week, causing WSU to close the Ibika campus indefinitely.

Four students share an old two-bedroom township house at Ibika township, paying R34,000 each a year.

In some residences those who pay for private accommodation pay R500 a month while the National Student Financial Aid Scheme-funded students pay R3,400.

Students allocated to the house have questioned how the university accredited a house that is far below standards set by the department of higher education & training for student accommodation.

Students at the Butterworth campus have been protesting since last Thursday, demanding, among other things better living conditions.

Third-year IT student Zanoxolo Dlamini said he did not believe an inspection had been done before the university approved the house.

"I feel like I am being robbed.
The money I pay is way too
much when one looks at the
conditions we live in," he said.

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Dlamini is sharing the house with three other students.

They share a toilet and a shower.

The bathroom walls have mould while the toilet has unremovable stains.

The lounge – used as a study area – also has a TV, fridge and a stove. "Basically, while you are studying, someone is cooking and another one is watching TV, The set-up is just a mess."

At Lumkwana residence in



PAYING OVER THE ODDS: Information technology student Zanoxolo Dlamini outside a four-room house in Ibika Township. Four students share the accommodation. Picture: SINO MAJANGAZA

Zazulwana township, tourism management second year student Awethu Nduneni shares one toilet and a bathtub with nine other students.

"I am unhappy with these conditions. If someone takes a bath you can't use the toilet. All our classes start around the same time so if I want to be on time I have to wake up much earlier," she said.

The Dispatch also visited another residence that was still under construction.

The residence, according to SRC president Lihle Klaas, has students allocated to it.

"There is so much corruption in the process of accrediting these places. How can a university approve a place that is not even complete?

"Students who are supposed to be staying here are squatting with friends while others are renting," he said. Asked whether inspections were done on the residences before they were allocated to students, WSU spokesperson Yonela Tukwayo gave a broader response, saying the closure of the campus had caused delays on operations.

"Staff members cannot work normally when the campus is closed, including convening pre-inspection meetings and printing the necessary contracts and checklists. The campus closure has halted all normal operations," she said.

Although campus remained closed, she said, they were negotiating for a peaceful opening "in order to address issues".

However, by late Wednesday talks between the SRC and campus management had collapsed. The SRC walked out of the meeting in Butterworth. Campus is closed and it is unclear when classes will resume.

Nightmare accommodation

ARETHA LINDEN

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A small waskom and a 51 bucket is what most female students at one Buffalo City Technical Vocational Educational and Training (TVET) College use to bath and relieve themselves.

With only three functional toilets and four showers in working order for more than 300 students at the Belgravia residences in Southernwood, East London, the residents said they longed for warm showers and decent toilets.

Last week the students went on a protest over the living conditions at their residences.

The Dispatch visited the Belgravia residences on Wednesday and gaining entry was easy as no form of identification was requested by the three security guards.

A public management student led the Dispatch to her room, but on the way the reporter had to navigate pools of water in the corridors.

A number of students spoke with the Dispatch on condition of anonymity.

"The water comes from the coilets.

"When we flush, it spills over into the corridors and into nearby rooms," said one.

A cleaning lady was seen mopping the water. The room, about 3m x 4m in size with a built-in wardrobe, is shared by two students at R2,000 each.

The room can only fit two single beds and a small table.

After contracting countless urinary tract infections (UTIs), the student said she had stopped using the toilets in the residence.

She pulled out a blue pail from under her bed.

"Sisi this is what I have been using to pee in for the past two years and when I want to do



MAKING DO: Walter Sisulu University student Awethu Nduneni at Lumkwana residence outside Butterworth. Picture: SINO MAJANGAZA



STUDY ROOM: A kitchen at BCC residence in Southernwood doubles as a study area when there is no space in the hall. Picture: ARETHA LINDEN

more than just urinate, I only do it when I am at school or when I go home on weekends," she

Another student showed the Dispatch a pocket-sized book with two pages filled with clinic visits when she was being treated for UTIs.

"At some stage the nurses at the clinic believed that I am a loose woman who sleeps around without protection. I don't blame them because where have you heard of a person having so many infections?

"They gave me a packet of condoms but I explained to them that I am not engaging in sex, but our toilets were the problem," she said.

Those who still used the bathrooms said they often had to stand in long queues to make use of them. Inside the toilets and rooms, the walls are covered in mould and have rusty burglar bars.

Some of the showers and taps are held together with plastic.

"There are days when yellow, murky and smelly stuff comes out of the toilets – it's awful," said another student.

Only one of the six stoves with four plates is in working condition, students said.

The kitchen sometimes doubles as a study area where pupils plug in their laptops when the hall is full.

Student leader Cat Moji said initially there were three residences, Belgravia for females and two male residences, but one of the male residences was closed in 2016 when it was deemed uninhabitable.

"There have been talks with council to source funding to fix the residences since the college is not getting infrastructure budget from the department of higher education and training, but we feel the college is not doing enough to partner with other partners such as public works to source funding," said Moji.

College principal Dharam-chand Singh said they were in the process of acquiring the services of Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA) to do a structural assessment of the buildings and advise on the work needed to get the residences into habitable conditions, and how much it would cost.

"The evaluation and costing report from DBSA will assist the college in determining the amount required in fixing the residences, the extent of work required and time-frames," said Singh.

In the meantime, Singh said maintenance was taking place with regards to toilets, geysers and electrical work and cleaning was done daily.