



**SMARTLY DRESSED:** The speaker of the Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature, Noxolo Kiviet, wears a yellow and blue outfit at the state of the province address in Bhisho. Picture: BRIAN WITBOOI

**HOT TOPIC:** Accommodation crisis

# NMMU helping find housing for students

ON Saturday February 11, NMMU dean of students Luthando Jack was alerted to students in need of accommodation being “housed” at the Unitas/Veritas (UV) Clubhouse by the unregistered Black Students Stokvel (BSS) organisation, without referring the matter to the dean’s office.

The dean rightly gave an immediate instruction for the director of student housing and accommodation to provide temporary housing relief for the group of five female students until a permanent solution was found.

Once this was done, the UV Clubhouse was then locked on Tuesday February 14, with maintenance staff cleaning up and painting the area the following day.

The front page article titled “Student housing crisis hits NMMU” (February 16), which appeared two days after the UV Clubhouse was cleared, takes the claim by the BSS group at face value, begging the question whether the reporter had bothered to check the facts on the ground.

Neither was this claim checked against the records of the university to see if anything had been done to assist these students.

The university accepts that there may well be students elsewhere in the city

waiting for NSFAS clearance and who cannot register or find accommodation and is greatly saddened by this.

Unfortunately, the article creates the impression of an uncaring university disengaging itself from lending a helping hand. Nothing could be further from the truth.

What is yet to be asked, or reported, are the dozens of cases where the office of the dean of students has intervened to provide support to stranded students, within the limits of our resources.

It is publicly known that the university received a larger than usual number of applications this year, that the existing on-campus accommodation sites do not meet the actual demand and there is a reliance on privately owned establishments to cover the balance of accommodation needs.

It is also well-known that poor students rely almost wholly on NSFAS grant funding, which has not been adequate.

A large number of stranded students are awaiting NSFAS approval and the university is pressing the financial aid scheme for speedy resolution to this matter as it is deeply concerned about eligible students not being able to register.

Where we have learnt of cases of stranded students, we have sought to intervene without fail.

We maintain an open door policy with recognised student leaders, and have a standing financial aid and admissions task team where such issues are reported.

What we object to is an attempt by certain student bodies to hijack the plight of poor students by deliberately not referring them to the relevant university authorities and using their stress as a source of political campaigning.

The university therefore appeals to students to contact the office of the dean of students directly for assistance.

The university is extending itself to provide support within the limits of its resources, to assist those students eligible for enrolment, as it has and continues to do.

Zandile Mbabela,  
NMMU media manager

*THE official response to The Herald from the university was: “The student housing [office] has not officially been made aware of students who do not have accommodation.” The Herald reported this.*

*The university also noted in its response that there had only been “rumours to that effect”. – The editor*