

Moves afoot at Fortuna

By **NINO BUCCI**

THE Defence Imagery Geospatial Organisation seems to have vacated Fortuna Villa, after 66 years within the grandiose walls of the Golden Square mansion.

The Advertiser believes DIGO staff completed the move to their new Longlea headquarters this week.

The relocation has taken place throughout the year, but earlier this month present and former DIGO staff held a get-together to farewell Fortuna in a clear sign of an imminent move.

Last week, removal trucks were seen leaving the 19th century villa on their way to the world-class Atlas Road centre.

DIGO director of policy, security and compliance Jonnine Negus declined to confirm the move.

She said the official opening of the Longlea facility would occur early in November and the celebrations would also pay tribute to Fortuna.

Army surveyors from Victoria Barracks in St Kilda Road moved to the abandoned Fortuna in 1942.

The Department of Defence now leaves the property with it significantly more in demand than when it arrived.

The future of the former George

Lansell property is the subject of much local conjecture.

The Villa Fortuna Action Group — thus far the only party to publicly show its hand — expects to present City of Greater Bendigo councillors with a detailed plan for the development of an arts and cultural precinct at the site in coming weeks.

Villa Fortuna Action Group secretary Terry Davidson said the only recent contact between his organisation and the Department of Defence dealt with a proposed date for a public open day.

“We received notification from the Department of Defence earlier this month about a public open day for November — possibly late October,” Mr Davidson said.

“We are in the process of preparing a document that we are going to submit to the council in the near future.

“It outlines our proposal in more depth.”

It is believed security at the site will be maintained by the Department of Defence now that DIGO has departed.

Last Friday the department was unable to confirm security arrangements.