

By SARAH MENNIE

FEDERAL Member for Bendigo Steve Gibbons has advocated selling part of the historic Fortuna Villa property to help meet maintenance costs associated with the mansion, ornamental lake and mining battery.

Mr Gibbons said subdividing the property and developing the non-heritage areas into private housing and a health or aged-care facility could help meet the substantial cost of maintaining the heritage assets.

“An enormous amount of work is required on the mansion, and the lake needs decontamination.”

Mr Gibbons said the buildings constructed during decades of use by the army were of no historic value.

“None of them were part of the original George Lansell property and they add no aesthetic value to it.”

Mr Gibbons said the land on which the heritage buildings stand is less than half the total Defence Department property.

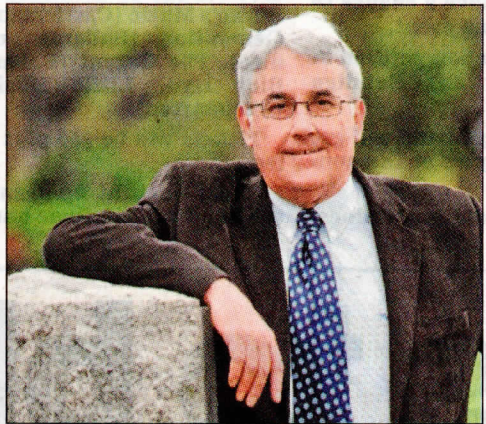
“I have already outlined the possibility of redeveloping the remaining areas and buildings in some way that generates enough revenue to maintain the historically significant parts of the property.”

Building a new road through the property connecting Marble and Chum streets would open up large parts of the site for other purposes.

“For example, the land to the west of the heritage lake and buildings could be used for a private housing development.

“And the area on the corner of Chum and Booth streets could be a suitable location for a major health facility, or an aged-care facility.”

Mr Gibbons said part of the proceeds from the development, and the ongoing rates, could be quarantined to provide a funding



Steve Gibbons

source that met most of the future costs of maintaining the historic buildings.

“This would enable part of George Lansell’s legacy to Bendigo to remain in public ownership without diverting funds away from other community services.”

Mr Gibbons said he was not offering any suggestions as to what Fortuna Villa should be used for but was focused on keeping it as a public asset.

“My personal view is and always has been that we cannot have the mansion passed into the private sector where it can be lost forever.

“If it is going to remain in public ownership there needs to be a way to maintain it that does not impact on ratepayers and tax payers.”

Mr Gibbons said his idea was just one, and he welcomed others.

The City of Greater Bendigo is waiting for reports from the Department of Defence before it forms an opinion on the future of the property.