

Decision on Villa's future moves closer

By NINO BUCCI

FORTUNA Villa may be one step closer to public ownership.

The Defence Department has announced that it is now finalising long-awaited due diligence investigations into the iconic mansion.

The report is likely to be completed by early next month and will then be distributed to the State Government and the City of Greater Bendigo.

The future of the Villa will then be decided by either state or local government, which will be given an opportunity to purchase the Golden Square landmark before it is placed on the open market.

A Defence Department spokeswoman said the site had yet to be valued.

The spokeswoman did not comment on what had delayed the investigations, which were due for completion almost six months ago.

"Some of the investigations have taken longer than originally anticipated," she said.

"The due diligence investigations have now been completed and Defence is waiting on the studies to be finalised.



PROGRESS: Defence is finalising its due diligence investigations.

Picture: JULIAN PROWD

"The due diligence studies will feature the results of the heritage, environmental contamination and unexploded ordnance investigations."

It is unclear when the disposal process will be completed, or when a valuation will be sought.

"The timing of the disposal action will be determined once

all the due diligence studies have been completed and have been fully considered by Defence," a Defence spokeswoman said.

The parliamentary secretary for Defence Support Dr Mike Kelly is still planning to visit Fortuna Villa during the upcoming parliament recess, but a date has not been set.

Dr Kelly is responsible for the disposal of all Defence properties.

His visit has also been delayed by several months, after Member for Bendigo Steve Gilbertson invited him to the former home of quartz king George Lansell in February.

Fortuna Glimpses — Page 16