

Plan to keep Fortuna in public hands

By ANNIKA SMETHURST

A DUE-DILIGENCE study of historic Fortuna Villa was released this week in a step that could see the landmark site fall into public hands.

The federal government report was handed to the City of Greater Bendigo on Monday providing a full analysis of all aspects of the site that could affect a sale.

The former family home of Bendigo's Quartz King George Lansell could end up in private hands, angering some groups including The Villa Fortuna Action Group who has a plan to bring Fortuna into public use as an arts and cultural enterprise centre.

Federal MP and Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support Mike Kelly toured the property and spoke with council staff about the future of the former military mapping centre.

Dr Kelly said the sale of Fortuna Villa was a priority but gave no timeline for the process.

"We can't put a date on it yet, it will take some time but we are hoping our meeting with the council this morning will



■ ON REFLECTION: Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support Mike Kelly at Fortuna. Photo: ANDREW PERRYMAN.

start the process," he said.

"An initial review of the findings of the investigations suggests overall, the property is in good condition and while some remediation and infrastructure maintenance work is likely to be required before sale, there appear to be no major issues

that would affect the disposal.

"Defence is continuing to engage with key stakeholders, including Heritage Victoria, the City of Greater Bendigo council and the local community during the disposal process of Fortuna Villa," Dr Kelly said.