

## Gaming machines opposed

AN additional 20 electronic gaming machines at the Shamrock Hotel have been opposed by City of Greater Bendigo councillors, who hold fears for problem gamblers.

While Crs Elise Champan and Helen Leach say the machines would not promote further gambling in the city, other councillors disagreed.

Cr Rod Campbell said the council should be guided by the community, who had noted concerns regarding the extra machines.

"The majority of people don't want this and it will have a detrimental impact," he said.

However Cr Leach said it was people's "democratic right" to gamble.

"You can bet on anything nowadays and having these extra machines won't change that," she said.

Cr Chapman agreed, saying the machines would not encourage more people to gamble.

"Our quote for gaming machines is 720 and we only have 640. You have to balance it up," she said.

The matter will now go to the Victorian Commission on Gambling Regulation.

# Million dollar question for Fortuna's future

BY EMMA-JAYNE SCHENK

FORTUNA'S owner Paul Banks has questioned whether he will continue his plight to redevelop the site.

He says it could cost him a further \$1.2 million to keep the villa running, after his proposal was referred to an independent panel.

Mr Banks plans to host outdoor events at the villa, to ensure his venture is financially sustainable, and has applied to rezone the site.

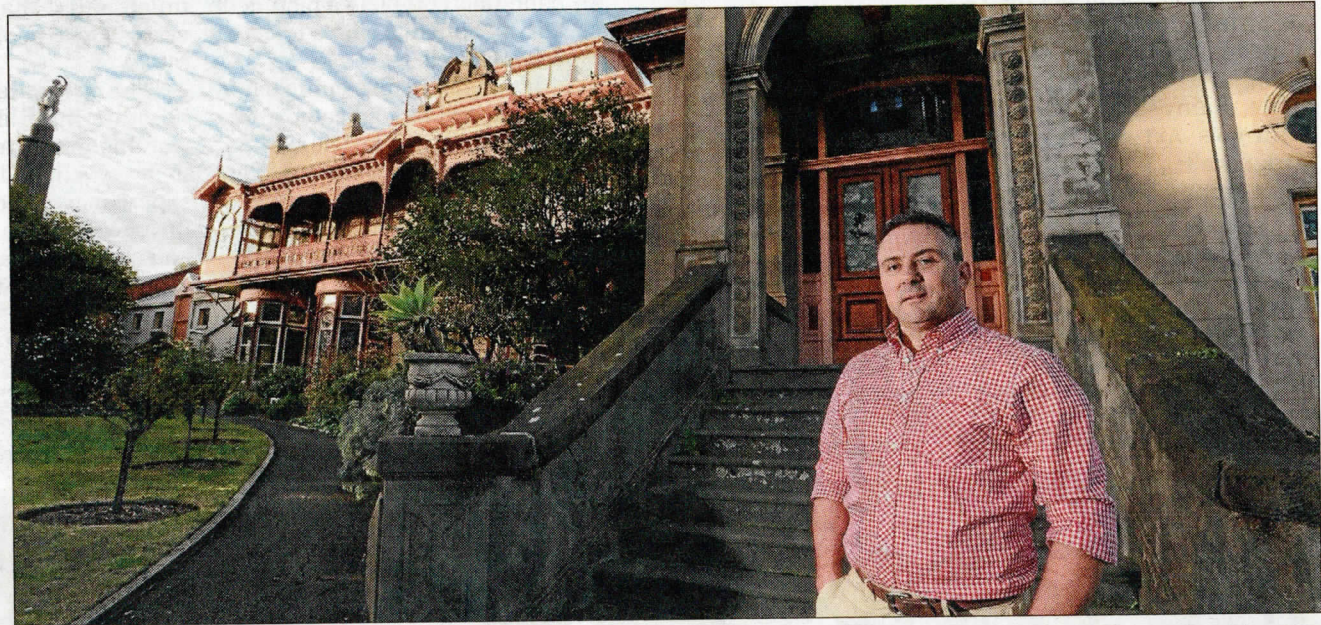
However the proposal has been referred to an independent panel, after one objection noted concerns about noise, development, and traffic.

Mr Banks said it was now the "\$1.2 million question" whether he could continue to fight.

"It's a sad day for Bendigo," he said.

"It costs me \$50,000 a month to maintain Fortuna and this will push back opening day possibly another two years.

"I just don't know if I can



QUESTION: Paul Banks speaks about the future of Fortuna Villa.

Picture: JIM ALDERSEY

afford it."

Mr Banks, who paid \$2.21 million for the historic property last year, said he would also have to pay for fees associated with the panel hearing.

"It all falls on me. I was ready to open the doors in a few months and now this

objection has held us back," he said.

"And while all this is going on, I have to keep painting the villa, maintaining it, paying for gardeners.

"I went on state government and council advice to choose this particular rezoning and have told

residents they will have a say with any developments down the road.

"Now we've hit do not pass go, do not come by the gates."

Councillors last night agreed to send the proposal to the independent panel, to give all parties a fair hearing.

Councillor Rod Fyffe said the independent panel would help determine what would be allowed to occur at Fortuna.

"There has been a lot of attention around this site, and rightly so, and residents have the right to be heard."