

BALLARAT CITY COUNCIL

Stoddart collection to be moved indoors

Options for long-term placement still to be decided

By **ANDREW EALES**

city council reporter

BALLARAT'S Stoddart statue collection will be moved indoors.

Ballarat City Council last night decided to move the seven remaining statues into Robert Clark Conservatory at Ballarat Botanical Gardens while other options for their long-term placement are decided.

While visitors to the gardens could previously view the collection for free, a move to the conservatory will mean the normal fee of entering the Robert Clark Centre will apply seven months of the year.

The cost of relocating the statues is estimated at \$1800.

The move follows significant vandalism of the statues in April.

Mayor David Vendy said while vandalism was an ongoing problem, following the April incident he believed the community was taking the attitude of "enough's enough".

Cr Vendy said the long-term plan was to utilise the fernery at the gardens to house the statues.

Service clubs were interested in assisting a redevelopment of the fernery, he said.

Cr Stephen Jones said it was a shame Ballarat had succumbed to the actions of vandals.

He said moving the statues indoors would take them away from the community.

Cr Peter Innes said council



Historic charm: The statue of *Leda* adding a graceful touch to the Ballarat Botanical Gardens in 1885. Picture from *Ballaarat Golden City*.

STATUES

needed to protect the statues and the only logical option was to store them indoors.

Council will also appoint a conservator to carry out repairs to *Hebe*, *Leda*, *Flora Farnesse* and *Autumn*.

Those repairs are estimated to cost \$21,000.

A working party — comprising Cr Vendy and representatives of the Friends of the Statues, Friends of Ballarat Botanical Gardens, Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, council

and environment manager Hedley Thomson, the community arts coordinator and a heritage consultant — will be formed to look at long term placement of the statues.

The statues and other elements of the gardens have been regularly vandalised in recent years.

Two of the collection, *Spring* and *Hercules*, were broken in 1993 and have not been returned to the gardens.

Another three — *Hebe*, *Leda* and *Flora Farnesse* — were

extensively damaged during April.

Two youths have since been charged for causing that damage.

A report tabled at last night's meeting said an art dealer from Carrara, Italy — where the original statues were commissioned — claimed the Ballarat collection was irreplaceable and should be conserved indoors.

The 118-year-old collection was brought to Ballarat from Carrara by Thomas Stoddart.

It has taken pride of place in the gardens ever since.