

## "AQUA PROFONDA" SIGN, FITZROY POOL



Aqua Profonda Sign, Fitzroy Pool | Hin Lim Photography | © 2021 HIN LIM AIPP



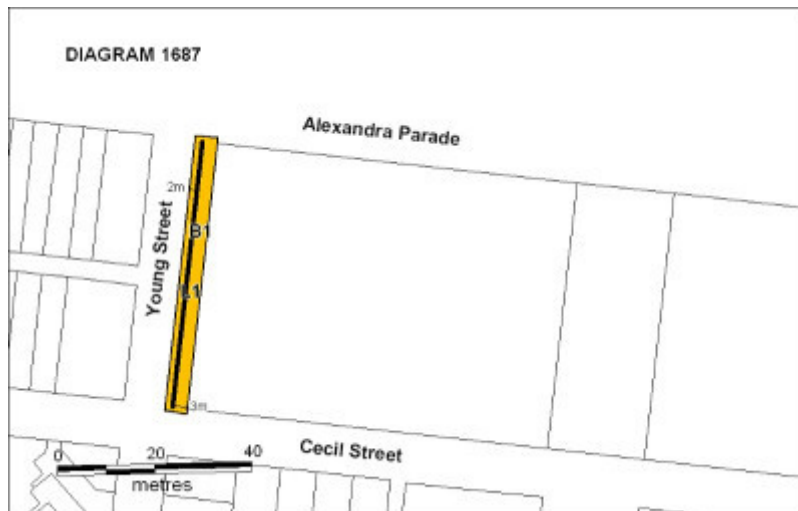
h01687 aqua profunda sign  
fitzroy pool



"AQUA PROFONDA" SIGN,  
FITZROY POOL SOHE 2008



h01687 fitzroy pool wall



h01687 fitzroy pool wall plan

### Location

ALEXANDRA PARADE FITZROY, YARRA CITY

### Municipality

YARRA CITY

## Level of significance

Registered

## Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H1687

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO355

## VHR Registration

July 8, 2004

## Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on - February 24, 2004

What is significant?

The Fitzroy Baths opened in 1908 with a men's pool described as the largest in Victoria measuring 175 ft by 80 ft and, separated by a wall, a women's pool measuring 76 ft by 30 ft. The Baths were Monier reinforced concrete structures designed and built under the supervision of Sir John Monash. Although the pools have been altered, they retain their original configuration with what was originally the women's pool now used as the children's pool. At the deep end of the main pool the words 'DANGER DEEP WATER' and underneath 'AQUA PROFONDA' are painted in black on the brick wall which runs along Young Street.

The sign was painted c. 1953-54 at the initiative of the pool manager, James Murphy, who was constantly rescuing migrant children from the deep end of the pool. Mr Murphy asked an Italian friend what the words for "deep water" were in Italian and had them painted at the deep end. "Aqua" is actually a misspelling of the Italian word: the correct spelling is "acqua" ("aqua" is the Latin spelling).

How is it significant?

The 'Aqua Profonda' sign is of social and historical significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The sign has social significance as a highly valued feature of inner Melbourne. The sign achieved iconic status through its appearance in the 1977 Helen Garner novel *Monkey Grip* and the subsequent film where the 'Aqua Profonda' sign served as a metaphor for the tempestuous relationship of the main protagonists. The importance of the sign and the pool to a wide community became evident during the highly successful Save Our Pool campaign of 1994-95 when the pool was threatened with closure by the City of Yarra commissioners. This campaign is often cited by writers and academics as a case study for successful grassroots campaigns.

The sign has historical significance for its associations with the post-war migration program which had such a profound impact on the Victorian community. The sign is indicative of the changing demographics of post-World War Two inner Melbourne when migrants replaced a segment of the population who moved to the outer suburbs. The sign demonstrates one way in which migrants were becoming accepted as part of the community and as such is a rare tangible example of a public acknowledgement of the cultural impact of the mass migration

program. The sign is symbolic of the pool as a place where the diverse population of inner Melbourne could mingle on equal terms.

## Permit Exemptions

### General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

**Places of worship:** In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must **notify** the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

**Subdivision/consolidation:** Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

### Specific Exemptions:

**General Conditions:** 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. **General Conditions:** 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and the Executive Director shall be notified as soon as possible. **Note:** All archaeological places have the potential to contain significant sub-surface artefacts and other remains. In most cases it will be necessary to obtain approval from Heritage Victoria before the undertaking any works that have a significant sub-surface component. **General Conditions:** 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan approved by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it. **Note:** The existence of a Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan endorsed by Heritage Victoria provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan. **General Conditions:** 4. Nothing in this declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. **General Conditions:** 5. Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authorities where applicable. **Minor Works :** **Note:** Any Minor Works that in the opinion of the Executive Director will not adversely affect the heritage significance of the place may be exempt from the permit requirements of the Heritage Act. A person proposing to undertake minor works may submit a proposal to the Executive Director. If the Executive Director is satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely affect the heritage values of the site, the applicant may be exempted from the requirement to obtain a heritage permit. If an applicant is uncertain whether a heritage permit is required, it is recommended that the permits co-ordinator be contacted.

\* Minor works and maintenance to the Young Street side of the wall and to the pool side of the wall which is further than 1500 mm away from the sign.

Construction dates	1954,
Heritage Act Categories	Registered place,
Other Names	ACQUA PROFONDA SIGN, FITZROY BATHS,
Hermes Number	4742
Property Number	

## History

### Contextual History:

Fitzroy's slum reputation was accompanied by the decline in the shopping areas as central Melbourne (Bourke Street) grew stronger and modern strips were built in newer suburbs.

When the Housing Commission built modern estates in outer suburbs in the post-war years some of Fitzroy's population took advantage of the new houses. Their places were often taken by post-war immigrants. By 1954 about 12% of Fitzroy's population was Italian-born; in 1966 33% were Italian or Greek-born, and Australian-born had fallen from two-thirds to one-half. The Italian-born and the population with an Irish background constituted a strong Catholic body. Within ten years, however, the numbers of Italian-born and Greek-born residents had halved and within another ten years they had halved again.

Between 1947 and 1991 Fitzroy's population fell by 44%, to 17,885. The non-Australian born component, however, moved from 42% in 1947, to a high of 49% in 1966 and back to 40% in 1976 and 1986. The ethnic composition moved from noticeably Italian/Greek to a wider range, with nearly 9% from Asia.

### History of place:

The Fitzroy Pool was opened on 21 October 1908 with a "men's basin" measuring 175 ft by 80 ft and a "women's basin" measuring 76 ft by 30 ft. The pool played an important role in a crowded inner city area with a high proportion of low income residents.

The Aqua Profonda sign was painted on the brick fence sometime in the 1950s. Italian Historical Society Curator Lorenzo Iozzi remembers the sign from his childhood in c.1958 (e-mail from Laura Mecca, Manager IHS). So far, research has not been successful in finding a date. Sources checked: Fitzroy Library Local History Collection, La Trobe Library, Italian Historical Society (phone discussion with Manager Laura Mecca), Fitzroy Council Minutes, PRO (c.1950-58 were checked but these are not indexed so perhaps a more detailed examination would find further information. There was a reference in March 1955 to the possibility of erecting a sign in Italian at a playground)). The word "aqua" is the Latin spelling for water while "profonda" is Italian for deep. According to the manager of the Italian Historical Society, Laura Mecca, "aqua" is probably a misspelling of "acqua" which she said is a common mistake.

The sign achieved iconic status through its appearance in the 1977 Helen Garner novel *Monkey Grip* and the subsequent film where the "Aqua Profonda" sign served as a metaphor for the tempestuous relationship of the main protagonists.

The pool became the focus of a community campaign when it was threatened with closure in 1994 by the Commissioners of the City of Yarra. The "Save Our Pool!" group were successful and the Commissioners reversed their decision.

## Extent of Registration

### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the Heritage Act, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by including the Heritage Register Number 1687 in the category described as a

Heritage Place:

ÒAqua Profonda SignÓ, Fitzroy Pool, Alexandra Parade, Fitzroy, Yarra City Council.

EXTENT:

1. All the wall at Fitzroy Pool along Young Street containing the "Aqua Profonda" sign marked B1 on Diagram 1687 held by the Executive Director.
2. All the land extending to three metres from the base of the wall on the pool side, being part of the land contained in Certificate of Title Volume 3238 Folio 557, and land extending to two metres from the base of the wall on the Young Street road reserve marked L1 on Diagram 1687 held by the Executive Director.

Dated 5 July 2004

RAY TONKIN  
Executive Director

[Victoria Government Gazette G 28 8 July 2004 p.1895]

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*