



THE NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (NSW) TRUST REGISTER LISTING REPORT

LOCALITY	ITEM NAME	ADDRESS
Elizabeth Bay POSTCODE 2011	Fitzroy Gardens incl. El Alamein Memorial Fountain	64-68 Macleay Street

LGA: Sydney

OWNER: City of Sydney

PROPONENT: Landscape Advocacy Committee

AUTHOR: Katya Petetskaya

DATE OF PROPOSAL: February 2011

ABORIGINAL NATION: Cadigal and Wangal people of the Eora

APPROVED 22/06/2011



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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Established in 1939, Fitzroy Gardens have high social significance due to their wide use by the local community and visitors as a public park in Kings Cross.

The Gardens are historically significant as the first example of a public park in Sydney being created by removing existing private housing. The Gardens represent the aspirations of the Sydney community to add green space in a densely urban area; and it is evidence of moves by the City Council to provide for public parks in Sydney in response to the public demand.

The Gardens have historical significance as a remnant of the Alexander Macleay estate, subdivided in 1841; as the site of the Florence Bartley Library, a Sulman award winning building demolished in 1997 and listed on the National Trust Register in 1996; and as the site of the El Alamein Memorial Fountain, a Sydney icon. Fitzroy Gardens have historical significance for their links with Alexander Macleay (1767-1848), Colonial Secretary of NSW between 1825 and 1837; Ilmar Berzins (1921-1993), the first qualified landscape architect to be employed by a local government authority in Australia; Thomas Laing, the honorary secretary of the Parks and Playground Movement of NSW; and Robert Raymond Woodward (1923-2010), a world-wide acclaimed Australian architect recognised for his innovative fountain designs.

The existing 1970 design of the Gardens by the landscape architect Ilmar Berzins is aesthetically significant and demonstrates creative innovation as an example of an early progression from modernism to postmodernism in Sydney landscape architecture. Examples of gardens of this period and style are increasingly rare.

Located in Fitzroy Gardens, the El Alamein Memorial Fountain is of State significance as a spectacular fountain and outstanding work of modernist design in water which has been copied all over the world. The Fountain is aesthetically rare in NSW as a local adaptation of the organic school of Scandinavian architectural design and as an example of the application of modernist design technology to fountain design. The Fitzroy Gardens were designed in response to the installation of the Fountain.

Assessment of Significance

SHR Criteria a

[Historical Significance: a) an item is important in the course, or pattern, of NSW cultural or natural history]

Fitzroy Gardens are historically significant as the first example of a public park in Sydney being created by removing existing private housing and as evidence of moves by the public and City Council to provide for public parks in Sydney.

The Gardens have significance as a remnant of the Alexander Macleay estate. Located in the Gardens the El Alamein fountain in particular is thought to be in close proximity to the location of the entrance gates to the Alexander Macleay estate property.

The Gardens were the site of the Florence Bartley Library, a Sulman award winning building demolished in 1997. The site contains El Alamein Memorial Fountain, a Sydney icon, named to commemorate the exploits of the Ninth Division in North Africa in the Second World War.

The El Alamein Memorial Fountain is of State significance as a war memorial to the Australian soldiers of the 9th Division who fought near the Egyptian town of El Alamein in two battles which helped turn the course of World War II towards victory for the Allies.

SHR Criteria b

[Association: an item has strong or special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in NSW cultural or natural history]

Fitzroy Gardens are strongly associated with work of Ilmar Berzins (1921-1993), the first qualified landscape architect to practise in Sydney and to be employed by a local government authority in Australia. Berzins was the landscape architect for the Gardens; he developed the 1970 design scheme and oversaw its implementation.

The Gardens have a special association with Thomas Laing, the honorary secretary of the Parks and Playground Movement of NSW who lobbied for a park in the area.

Fitzroy Gardens have a special association with work of Robert Raymond Woodward (1923-2010), an Australian architect who gained widespread recognition for his innovative fountain designs. Woodward designed the El Alamein Fountain located in Fitzroy Gardens. Woodward believed that architectural projects should be site-specific and this highlights the importance of Fitzroy Gardens as a setting for the El Alamein Fountain.

Fitzroy Gardens have a strong association with Alexander Macleay (1767-1848), Colonial Secretary of NSW between 1825 and 1837. The site of the Gardens was originally part of the Alexander Macleay estate.

The Gardens also have associations with many owners and occupiers of note including: Edward Broadhurst, barrister and nominee for the Legislative Council, Charles James Roberts hotelier and MLC, Sir Adrian Knox, eminent gynaecologist (*Osterley*); and William Salmon Deloitte, shipping merchant and Samuel Aaron Joseph, founding director of the mercantile firm Montefiore, Joseph & Co (*Maramanah*).

SHR Criteria c

[Aesthetic Significance: an item is important in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics and/or a high degree of creative or technical achievement in NSW]

The existing 1970 design of Fitzroy Gardens by the landscape architect Ilmar Berzins is aesthetically significant and demonstrates creative innovation as an example of an early progression from modernism to postmodernism. The 1970 Berzins design is anchored in its hexagonal plinth. The convict-brick planter beds imitate this shape, providing the Gardens a strong visual link to the Fountain. Later modifications detract from the integrity of the 1970s design.

Fitzroy Gardens have landmark qualities due to the El Alamein fountain located at the entrance to the Fitzroy Gardens. Designed by Robert Woodward and opened in November 1961 the El Alamein Memorial Fountain is a spectacular fountain and outstanding work of modernist design in water which has been copied all over the world. Aesthetically it is rare in NSW as a local adaptation of the organic school of Scandinavian architectural design and as an example of the application of modernist design technology to fountain design.

SHR Criteria d

[Social Significance: an item has strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group in NSW for social, cultural or spiritual reasons]

Social significance of Fitzroy Gardens is associated with the use of the Gardens as a public park in Kings Cross. The early and continued popularity of Fitzroy Gardens demonstrates the success of the park within the Kings Cross and wider Sydney community. It is widely used by the local community and visitors for recreation, as a meeting point and for the markets.

Fitzroy Gardens were established as a public park in 1939 in response to public and Council demands for a park in Kings Cross and Potts Point. The Gardens have high social significance as they represent the aspirations of the Sydney community to add green space in a densely urban area.

The Gardens are important to the Kings Cross and wider Sydney community's sense of place and identity. The Gardens were purpose built for the benefit of local residents and there continues to be a strong sense of ownership of the Gardens by the community. The importance of the Gardens to the community is evident in the current and past concern and tension expressed by the community surrounding changes to the park.

SHR Criteria e

[Research Potential: an item has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of NSW cultural or natural history]

Work in Fitzroy Gardens in 1970 unearthed artefacts from the Macleay gardens. Future site work may reveal additional items of archaeological value.

The Gardens have research potential for understanding the development of the Potts Point and Elizabeth Bay area.

Fitzroy Gardens have also research potential for providing information on early progression from modernism to postmodernism in landscape architecture in NSW.

SHR Criteria f

[Rarity: an item possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of NSW cultural or natural history]

The Fitzroy Gardens is the first example in Sydney history of a public park that was created by removing existing private housing for community use. The existing 1970 design of the Gardens by the landscape architect Ilmar Berzins is aesthetically significant and demonstrates creative innovation as an example of an early progression from modernism to postmodernism in Sydney landscape architecture. Examples of gardens of this period and style are increasingly rare.

The El Alamein Memorial Fountain is rare as a war memorial in NSW which commemorates a battle rather than the loss of individual members of the armed forces. It is also unusual because its beauty as a fountain has historically almost overwhelmed its solemn function as a war memorial.

SHR Criteria g

[Representativeness: an item is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of NSW: - cultural or natural places; or - cultural or natural environments]

Fitzroy Gardens are representative historically and socially as an example of mini-botanical gardens and an inner city public park.

The existing 1970 design by Ilmar Berzins is an example of an early progression from modernism to post-modernism in landscape architecture in Sydney. Berzins endowed his designs with contemporary European Modernist philosophy, which provided a strong contrast to the traditional council designs of the time.

HISTORY

Before 1939

The 'Eora People' was the name given to the coastal Aborigines around Sydney. Within the City of Sydney local government area, the traditional owners are the Cadigal and Wangal bands of the Eora. With the invasion of the Sydney region, the Cadigal and Wangal people were decimated but there are descendants still living in Sydney today.

The Woolloomooloo locality, including Kings Cross, Potts Point and Elizabeth Bay, was the site of an area set aside by Governor Macquarie around 1817 for a composite group of Cadigal Aboriginal people under the leadership of Bungaree. A pen sketch by Edward Mason from 1822-3 shows a series of bark huts inhabited by indigenous people at that time. Within a few years, the next governor, Thomas Brisbane had re-designated the area, this time as an asylum for the insane. In 1826, 54 acres (22ha) of this land - supposedly set aside for an asylum - was granted to Alexander Macleay by Governor Darling. Macleay set about improving the land using assigned convict labour. His horticultural expertise, assisted by gardener Robert Henderson, resulted in a private botanic garden with picturesque features including dwarf stone walls, rustic bridges and winding gravel walks amid the existing native vegetation.

Macleay's grant was bounded on the west by Macleay Street to the intersection with Wylde Street, on the south by Barnclueth Square, the remaining boundaries being frontages to Elizabeth Bay and Rushcutters Bay. The drive to the house is today traced by Elizabeth Bay Road.

Possibly due to political differences with the new, more liberal Governor Bourke, Macleay was ousted from his post as Colonial Secretary in 1837. The loss of salary and the onset of recession contributed to financial problems resulting in the attempt to subdivide his Elizabeth Bay grant. It was subdivided and offered for sale on 20th October 1841. In 1865 Alexander's son George Macleay inherited the estate. He progressively subdivided and sold leaseholds from it resulting in the growth of suburban housing in the localities now known as Elizabeth Bay, Potts Point and Kings Cross. The site of the Fitzroy Gardens and El Alamein Fountain was part of the 1841 subdivision of Colonial Secretary Alexander Macleay's 54 acre Elizabeth Bay estate.

1939 – 1968

Fitzroy Gardens were formed in 1939 on the site of *Osterley*, a substantial Victorian colonial style house that was built in the mid 1850's. The house was demolished in 1927 and the site was used for a variety of purposes. It was intended to develop the site for a Paradise Theatre and a design was prepared by the noted architect, Bruce C. Dellit. The project did not proceed and the Minerva Theatre was built in Macleay Street to the design of the same architect.

Demand for a park in the area came due to increasing population density from local residents, councillors and Thomas Laing, the honorary secretary of the Parks and Playground Movement of NSW. Several sites were suggested but the Council preference was for two sites in Macleay Street. The site at 62 Macleay Street (*Osterley*) was purchased in 1938 and the park was constructed in 1939. It was a modest garden running from Macleay Street to Baroda Lane (now Baroda Street) representing a largely landscaped space in a traditional form with a large area of lawn and a perimeter stone boundary wall with few cross paths. The design was amended to include a children's play area, practice in line with other parks and Council's determination to provide such facilities. The park was named 'Fitzroy Gardens' after Fitzroy Ward of the City of Sydney, which itself had been named after NSW Governor Sir Charles Fitzroy (1846- 1855).

There was some development during the war with the addition of a central path and the construction of an air raid shelter. It would seem it was always Council's intention to expand the Gardens. The park was enlarged when *Maramanah* at 64 Macleay Street (the site of the El

Alamein Fountain) was demolished in 1954. In 1954 the City of Sydney resumed and demolished *Tenilba* at 60 Macleay Street.

Table 1 demonstrates the estates that were purchased by the City Council at different times in the latter half of the twentieth century to create Fitzroy Gardens as a public park.

Table 1: Estates purchased by the City Council to create Fitzroy Gardens

Address	Estate Name	Date of Acquisition
60 Macleay Street	Tenilba	1954 (became site of the Florence Bartley Library and not discussed in detail)
62 Macleay Street	Osterley	1939
64 Macleay Street	Maramanah	1945

Source: John Oultram Heritage & Design, 2010 p.9

The construction of the Florence Bartley Library in 1958 (designed by Arthur Collins) introduced a built element into the site and changed the nature of the site along its northern edge. The Library won the John Sulman Award in 1958. It was demolished in 1997. The Florence Bartley Library was listed on the National Trust Register on 28 August 1996.

In 1961 the El Alamein Memorial Fountain was constructed at the corner of Darlinghurst Road and Elizabeth Bay Road. The El Alamein Memorial Fountain was the result of a competition organised by the Sydney Fountains Committee who ran design competitions for fountains in Public Spaces. The competition was won by architects Woodward & Taranto who produced an essay on a hexagonal theme with a beautiful dandelion spray to the centre with water cascading into a series of faceted pools. Council resolved to name the structure the El Alamein Memorial Fountain to commemorate the exploits the Ninth Division of the Australian forces in North Africa in the Second World War.

The opening of the Florence Bartley Library in 1959 and El Alamein Fountain in 1961 mark a turning point for the character of Fitzroy Gardens. Both structures received immediate recognition. The presence and importance of both, particularly the fountain, inspired the first attempt to improve and unify the entire park through a landscape design.

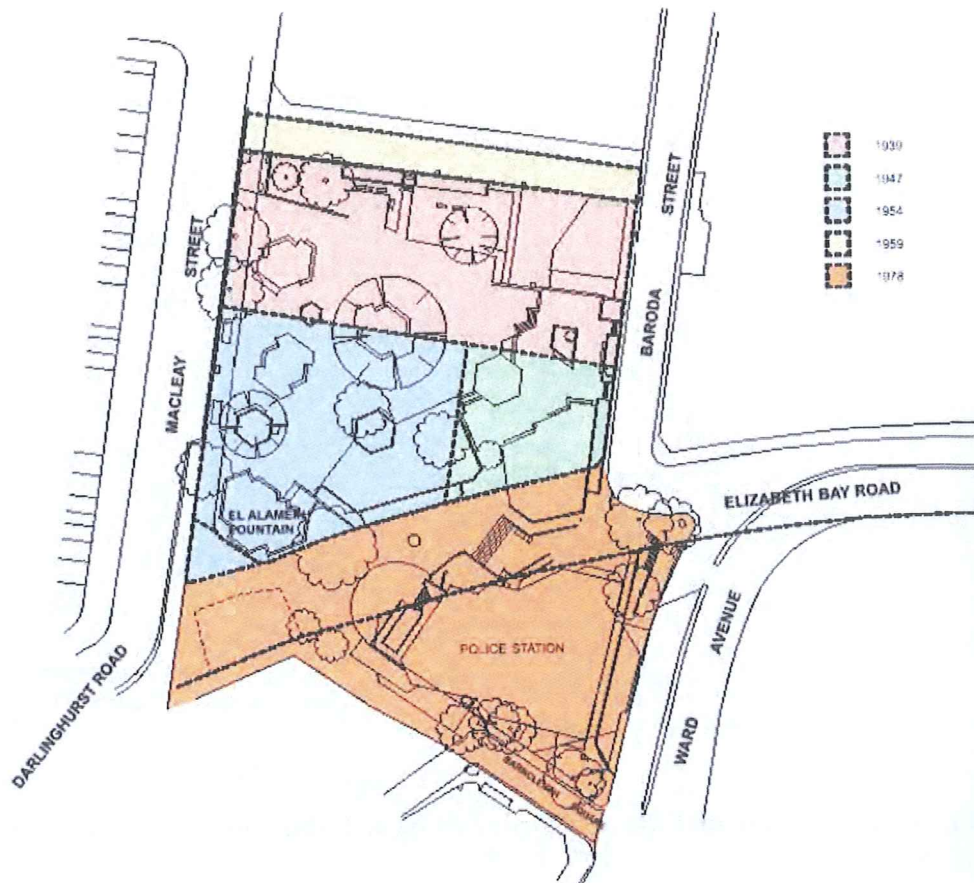


Fig.2: Fitzroy Gardens Historical Development

Source: John Oultram Heritage & Design, 2010: 68

The Berzins design replaced the former lawn areas with hard paving as the grass was proving unsuitable for the level of traffic. Seating was increased to account for the intensity of use during the day and night. Raised planter beds were added and the level changes introduced with low brick walls. The walls were built using convict bricks, often imported from elsewhere. Some of the sandstone walls from the earlier park were re-used. Berzins' scheme introduced a hexagonal geometry in the layout and raised planters with multiple level changes.

The Berzins design plays on the hexagonal geometry of the fountain. The design is a pattern of pavers and planters which attempts to draw on the geometry of the fountain to create axes and connections throughout the Gardens.

In 1975 Elizabeth Bay Road was closed to traffic and the former sites of 1-13 Elizabeth Bay Road were added to Fitzroy Gardens increasing its size by one-third. However part of this extra space was soon taken up by the Kings Cross Police Station. A two storey police station was built to the south eastern corner of the Gardens (on the site of 1-13 Elizabeth Bay Road) in 1979 and Elizabeth Bay Road was pedestrianised. Kings Cross police station was substantially upgraded and enlarged in 1998.



Fig.3: Concept design for Fitzroy Gardens by Ilmar Berzins, 1968

Source: City of Sydney Archives Series 648: *Plans of Parks, Reserves and Playgrounds*: 242-245.

A bronze sculpture, *Angled Wheels of Fortune*, was added in 1988 from a donation by developer Dennis Wolanski.

In 1997 the Florence Bartley Library was demolished to allow for the development of the Rex Hotel on the site to the north and an attempt was made to integrate the development into the Gardens with a colonnade and retail units. The construction of the Rex Hotel development in 1997 at the northern end of the Park was the last major development at the Park edge.

DESCRIPTION

Fitzroy Gardens is a small public urban park bounded by Macleay Street, the Rex Hotel, Baroda Street and Kingsley Hall. The site falls from west to east and is largely paved, with a series of level changes, retaining walls, steps and ramps. To the south there is a two storey rendered masonry building housing the Kings Cross Police Station and some public toilets.

The current layout of the Gardens is the one designed by the landscape architect Ilmar Berzins. The Berzins design imitates the El Alamein Fountain's hexagonal theme in its shape and layout, giving the Gardens a strong visual link to the Fountain. The hexagonal planters all date from the 1970's works.

Berzins avoided dampness and overshadowing by large well-spread trees by combining paved, grassed areas and plinths for trees. The design featured a local history "wall of memories" embedding memorial plaques and bricks collected from the demolished buildings including convict bricks from Elizabeth Bay House estate. This added to the formal entry from Elizabeth Bay Road and added to the sandstone walls built as a formal entry from this frontage in 1960.

There are two major cross routes through the site, one to the north and one to the south. The south route is paved and falls to the east with ramps and access steps to the other areas and the police station and lavatories to the south east corner. To the north is a paved concourse set at a lower level than the main Gardens with a colonnade to the modern development and shops to the north.

The detail of the paving varies reflecting the various stages of development. The pavers are generally square, unglazed terracotta varying in colour. The original paving pattern from the 1970s works is evident from the change of colour in the paving and the diagonal pattern along Macleay Street. The square red-brown pavers are from Bulli Brick and Tile Co (now defunct). The later paving works and retaining walls are in reconstituted stone and concrete.

The Gardens have a series of hexagonal planter boxes with mature trees and planting with projecting wings with free standing seats in the recesses. There are also perimeter planter boxes and some small areas of lawn and gravel. The planters and retaining walls are in convict bricks, modern bricks and uncoursed, rockface sandstone and granite with stone cappings. The ramps and steps are generally in pavers but there are some in sandstone. There is some evidence from the earlier gardens in the stone boundary walls and steps to Baroda Street.

There are many mature trees, including a large Ficus, Palms (var. species), a Chinese Elm, Box Elder Tree, Magnolia Grandiflora and an elegant grouping of ten Soft Tipped Yuccas. The various planters have a mix of exotics. The Ficus, Soft Tipped Yuccas and planters are part of the 1970 Berzins design layout. The central grand Ficus tree has landmark qualities to the Gardens. The Ficus tree and Chinese Elm were part of the gardens of *Maramanah* mansion (a Victorian mansion demolished in 1954 to make way for the Gardens). During design and construction of the Gardens a lighting consultant was engaged. No elevated light columns are used and all sources of light being concealed to concentrate on lighting up the framework of trees.

There is an enclosed play area to the north east with a shade cloth structure over.

There are several structures and plaques in the Gardens. To the south west corner is the Al Alamein fountain, a low, hexagonal, sandstone structure with stepped levels and overflows and a circular fountain as the centrepiece. There is a small plaque to the side of the fountain detailing its designer and installation.

To the Police forecourt is substantial bronze sculpture, Angled Wheels of Fortune. The sculpture presents itself as a series of interlocking rings with a base plaque detailing its installation. To the north east is a brick wall marking the works from the 1970s and the use of convict bricks with a

small plaque and stone rainwater spout, reputedly from the gardens to Elizabeth Bay House. To the north is a bronze sculpture on a stone plinth, Howdy Partner, commemorating Maurice Bernard Houghton.

There are a number of other smaller structures: seating, light poles, pit covers, signs, refuse bins, post boxes. There is a location sign close to the Fountain with directional signs to worldwide cities with distances marked.

Later modifications and management of the park have detracted from much of the original design and character.

The area surrounding the Gardens is densely urban with many tall structures along Macleay Street and along Baroda Street. Many of the distinctive buildings date from the Inter War years but the high building to the north, the Rex Hotel, is modern. To the east is the tower to the former Gazebo Hotel. Some of the streets retain early trachyte kerbs including along Macleay Street, Baroda Street and Elizabeth Bay Road that signal the earlier street alignments.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Together with Fitzroy Gardens other important designs by Ilmar Berzins for the City Council include the Arthur McElhone Reserve in Elizabeth Bay and Sandringham Gardens in Hyde Park.

The Arthur McElhone Reserve has historical significance from its 19th century use and is one of the first public parks designed and constructed by Sydney City Council after World War II (although Fitzroy Gardens were established earlier in 1939). The Reserve was created on what had been Elizabeth Bay House's famous lawn (three lots, unsold in the 1927 subdivision). The Arthur McElhone Reserve was part of Sydney City Council policy to enhance the environment of the city and its environs adopted in 1948. The Reserve is significant through its association with the work of Ilmar Berzins who designed the Reserve in 1950-1953. It is one of the early park designs of Berzins. The essential design and character of the Reserve as designed by Berzins has been maintained.

The Sandringham Memorial Gardens in Sydney's Hyde Park North (on the eastern side, close to the intersection of Park Street and College Street) is a terraced garden was designed by Ilmar Berzins and others as a memorial to kings George V and George VI. It was opened by the Queen during her first visit to Australia in 1954. The Gardens are named after the royal family's residence in Norfolk, England. The memorial was designed as a sunken garden with a reflecting pool partly enclosed by a pergola, and its association with the King's home at Sandringham, Norfolk, England was to be marked by the a gift of 12 oak and elm trees. The gardens, which feature memorial gates, pathways, pergola, steps, ornamental lamp standards and a fountain, continue to provide a colourful spring highlight in the centre of the city. The Sandringham Gardens were heritage listed as part of Hyde Park under the Sydney Local Environmental Plan on the 9th December 2005.

BOUNDARY OF LISTING

The boundary of the listing should include the area within the legal property boundaries consisting of 12 lots - Lot 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10 DP456564; Lot 1 DP129261; Lot 1 DP447466 – and part of the Darlinghurst Road reserve. The listing area of land is approximately 5,982 square meters. The boundary of Listing is outlined in red and shown in Figure 5.

Located in Fitzroy Gardens the El Alamein Memorial Fountain is listed under the NSW Heritage Act (gazetted 14 January 2011) and is also on the Royal Australian Institute of Architects Register (since 08 April 1994). Fitzroy Gardens Group including The El Alamein Fountain is heritage listed under the South Sydney Local Environmental Plan 1998 (gazetted 28 July 2000).



Fig.5: Boundary of Listing: Fitzroy Gardens 64-68 Macleay Street, Elizabeth Bay, NSW, 2011

Source: SIX: Spatial Information eXchange. Accessed 15 February 2011

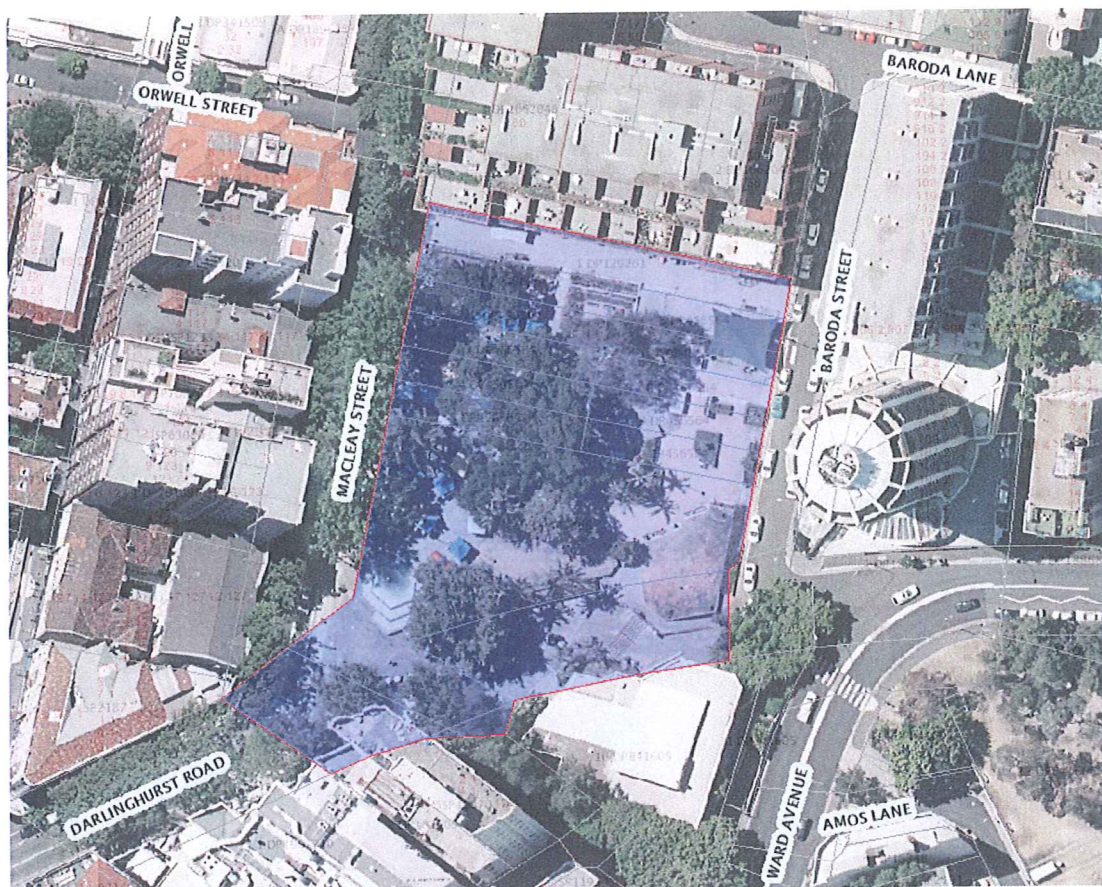


Fig.6: Boundary of Listing: Fitzroy Gardens – Aerial view

Source: SIX: Spatial Information eXchange. *Accessed 15 February 2011*