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## James White - Statue Of Edmund Gerald Fitzgibbon



B7228 Edmund Fitzgibbon



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### Location

Grass nature strip between east carriageways opposite Linlithgow Avenue St Kilda Road, MELBOURNE VIC 3004 - Property No B7228

### Municipality

MELBOURNE CITY

### Level of significance

State

### Heritage Listing

National Trust

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### Statement of Significance

Last updated on - March 17, 2005

What is significant? A statue which was commissioned by the City of Melbourne Council in 1906 to commemorate the fifty years of service of Edmund FitzGibbon to the city. The statue, by the sculptor James White, is executed in bronze and stands on a plinth of Harcourt granite. The statue was re-located in 2002 by the City of Melbourne to a prominent position on St. Kilda Road, Melbourne, approximately two hundred metres south of its original location in 1908. Previously located to the north of Parliament Station, the statue has undergone significant conservation before its installation at the present site.

How is it significant? The statue of Edmund G FitzGibbon, by the sculptor James White, erected in 1908 by the Melbourne City Council, is significant for social reasons at a State level.

Why is it significant? The statue commemorates the life of one of Melbourne's longest serving civic leaders, Edmund FitzGibbon. Following the death of FitzGibbon late in 1905, the City Council invited several eminent

sculptors to compete for the commission to execute a statue in remembrance of his contribution to the governance of Melbourne.

The competition was won by James White, an eminent sculptor practising in Sydney but already responsible for many prestigious public sculptures in Australia, notably in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. White had recently completed the Queen Victoria Memorial, Queen Victoria Gardens, Melbourne (1904-07). Although popular and successful during the 1890's and early 1900's White's work was often criticised at the time in the press as lacking in character.

The statue is particularly significant because of the career of its subject and the impact that he had on the improvement and development of Melbourne over a fifty year period in public office. FitzGibbon was Town Clerk of Melbourne for thirty five years and the founding Chairman of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works. In these roles he oversaw significant improvements to the city including facilitation of the introduction of the tramway system, and introduction of a sewerage system and water controls. He was far sighted in his efforts to minimise pollution of the Yarra River. Contemporary correspondence in the press of the time confirms the respect he had earned from the citizens of Melbourne.

Classified: 07/04/2004

Hermes Number 71646

Property Number

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## Physical Description 1

The statue is of a standing male figure cast in bronze. The figure is posed "as if delivering a speech" with the right hand outstretched, the fingers pointing towards the city. The left hand holds a document and at the base there is a pile of books. FitzGibbon is clothed in knee-breeches, stockings and buckled shoes, and wears the wig and gown befitting to his role as a barrister. The figure is designed to command a 360 degree access with a distinctive front and side view, but "not so attractive back view" (Report to City of Melbourne, 1983).

The bronze figure is mounted on a pedestal which consists of three parts: plinth, body and pediment. This stands on a granite base comprising two steps and is surrounded by a bluestone pavement. In keeping with the Memorial Committee's desire for "Australian material and workmanship", the pedestal is of "fine axed grey Harcourt granite" (The Weekly Times, Melbourne, 8. Feb. 1908). The dimensions are:

Granite Plinth

Height: 390 cms

Base: 274 cms

Statue

Height: 274 cms.

The original cost of the statue was 1115 pounds, with 1100 pounds being paid to James White. The pedestal bears the following inscription:

EDMUND GERALD

FITZGIBBON

J.P. C.M.G.

TOWN CLERK

OF THE

CITY OF MELBOURNE

1856 - 1891

FIRST CHAIRMAN

OF THE

MELBOURNE AND METROPOLITAN

BOARD OF WORKS

1891 - 1906

ERECTED BY PUBLIC SUBSCRIPTION 1908

## **Intactness**

The statue and base are in very good condition having recently undergone restoration prior to re-location by International Conservation Services Pty. Ltd. of Chatswood, Sydney. The contract called for general cleaning to remove salts and pollutants and copper stains as well as removal of decayed joints and copper pointing. Having been washed down, the bronze statue was waxed with microcrystalline wax. The statue was positioned on a 100mm. thick reinforced concrete slab.

*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/>*