

Rotary District 9685 Vocational Excellence Awards 2024

Professor Mary-Louise McLaws

Prof Mary-Louise McLaws is a Professor of Epidemiology, Healthcare Infection and Infectious Disease Control. She has been an influential academic at the UNSW and advisor to the World Health Organization.

As a leading epidemiologist with expertise in hospital infection and infectious diseases control, her COVID-19 related activities included being a member of the (WHO) Health Emergencies Program Experts Advisory Panel for Infection Prevention and Control Preparedness, Readiness and Response to COVID-19, and a member of the NSW Clinical Excellence Commission COVID Infection Prevention and Control taskforce. She is also the focal point for the WHO Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network in the School of Population Health UNSW.

As Honorary Advisor to the Clinical Excellence Commission, she collaborated on state-wide patient safety interventions: improving hand hygiene in healthcare care workers, reducing central line associated bloodstream infections, and detecting and treating sepsis early in patients presenting to emergency departments. Her work has included a seminal evaluation of healthcare associated infections since 1984, and she developed the first surveillance system for healthcare associated infections as a pilot in 1998-2001 for the NSW Health Department.

Prof McLaws was a short missions WHO Advisor to China and Malaysia during the development of national hospital infection surveillance, and collaborated with Beijing to review the response to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak and healthcare worker safety for the Hong Kong SARS designated hospital. She was also commissioned by the Commonwealth to review the Pandemic Influenza Infection Control Guidelines for evidence of protection for healthcare workers.

In 2022, in recognition of her lifetime of service, she was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia for distinguished service to medical research, particularly to epidemiology and infection prevention, to tertiary education, and to health administration.

Also in 2022, in recognition of over 36 years of dedicated service at UNSW Sydney, Professor McLaws was joined by over 100 guests, including former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, NSW's Chief Health Officer Kerry Chant, and UNSW Chancellor David Gonkski, to celebrate a lifetime of achievements and contributions to the field of infectious diseases and public health globally.

Malcolm Turnbull expressed his admiration for Prof. McLaws, saying "You spoke truth, you took on the pandemic of disinformation, you helped keep us safe, for that we owe you so much."

Prof McLaws, Rotary District 9685 is honoured to recognise you with a 2023 District Vocational Excellence Award.