

Miss Mary Silvester McLelland

The degree of Doctor of Social Work (honoris causa) was conferred upon Miss Mary Silvester McLelland on 12 June 1990.



Miss Mary Silvester McLelland with Professor Stuart Rees, *photo, University of Sydney Archives.*

Citation

Presented by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Don McNicol

Chancellor,

I have the honour to present Miss Mary Silvester McLelland for the conferring of the degree of Doctor of Social Work (honoris causa).

Mary McLelland was born in Queensland in 1920. She graduated Bachelor of Arts from the University of Queensland in 1941 and, in 1945, enrolled in the social work course at this University. After receiving the Diploma in Social Studies in 1947, she was employed by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services in its emerging social work division.

In 1950 she travelled to North America and studied at the School of Social Service Administration of the University of Chicago, graduating with the degree of Master of Arts in Social Work. At this time, no postgraduate training in social work was available in Australia. Overseas travel was the only choice for those who sought further study. Few were able to do this and Miss McLelland joined the small group who formed the basis of Australia's capacity to develop its own educational programme.

In 1953 she returned to Australia and was appointed to the then Department of Social Studies in this University as a Senior Research Fellow. In 1954, she was appointed a lecturer with responsibility for the

development and planning of courses in the principles of social work practice. From 1956 she had the responsibility for the specialised area of family and child welfare. In 1964, Mary McLelland was promoted Senior Lecturer.

In the following year, she was appointed Supervisor of Professional Training with responsibility for the direction of social work education in the University of Sydney. She held this position until her retirement in 1975. Considerable developments occurred during this period.

In the educational programme, the two year diploma was developed into the present four year bachelor's degree and a master's degree was introduced. The student body underwent considerable expansion during the period of the Whitlam government, with consequent problems in the recruitment and support of additional staff and in the maintenance of the fieldwork system.

Mary McLelland's career in the profession is equally distinguished. Most outstanding is her contribution to the only social work journal in the country, **Australian Social Work**, which she edited from 1966 to 1975. She is still an active member of its editorial committee and its current healthy status is, in no short measure, due to her sound academic judgement and editorial skills.

As a contributor to public policy, Mary McLelland has also played a significant role. In 1967, she was appointed to the Child Welfare Advisory Council of New South Wales, a statutory body to advise the then entitled Minister for Child Welfare. She chaired the Council from 1977 to 1979. During her period in the chair, she was appointed to head a major inquiry into the adoption laws of the State.

In 1980, she was appointed to the Commonwealth Administrative Appeals Tribunal to sit particularly on cases in the area of social security.

The period after the Second World War may be regarded as the second stage of social work education in Australia. The first stage, beginning in the 1930s, saw social work education established in the community and move into the universities. The second stage, from the 1950s to the 1970s, saw the development of the educational programme to degree status. The third stage, in which we are now situated, has seen the establishment of an entirely Australian profession, not dependent on others for its growth and development. In the second stage, the University of Sydney, and social work in Australia, had few persons to equal Mary McLelland. A product of this University, she brought its social work course to degree status and remains an active contributor to a profession she has both shaped and adorned.

Chancellor, Mary McLelland is a distinguished social work educator appropriately honoured in this, the fiftieth year of social work education in the University of Sydney. As the first recipient of this degree, I present to you Mary Silvester McLelland for admission to the degree of Doctor of Social Work (honoris causa).