ATSE FELLOW
Distinguished Professor Lidia Morawska FTSE FAA

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Airborn particle transmssion

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Helping the world breathe easy

Professor Lidia Morawska's career has always focused on practical solutions. From a start measuring radioactivity in the environment, she has found herself one of the world's leading advocates for robust standards on the quality of indoor air.

A major health concern that appeared in the public consciousness during the heights of the COVID-19 pandemic, the quality of the air we breathe indoors while at home, out shopping or at the office has a major impact on people's lives. Compounded in Australia by frequent bushfires wafting fine particles of ash into our lungs, and the importance of clean air is clear.

Lidia has been working with the World Health Organization since 1996, the United Nations and standards bodies across the world to reflect her research about air quality in practical building codes and professional practices. This means combining her passion for scientific discovery with her drive for impact and policy change. Over time, she's had to develop new skills in advocacy. She's come to learn the slow, frustrating and complex path that leads to policy solutions.

And she's learnt that you have to act when the time is right. Pandemics in the past were often accompanied by significant social, policy and infrastructure change. She hopes that indoor air quality standards can be one such change for the post-COVID world. There was no interest in the implementation of the outcomes of indoor air quality research just a few years ago, but performance standards are now within reach.

Advocating for better air quality standards affecting millions of people takes many kinds of expertise. Getting every relevant discipline and its experts involved is how we will be able to design effective solutions.

This means working across wildly disparate domains: architecture, medicine, fluid mechanics, environmental science, traffic engineering and many more.

Lidia has become fluent in navigating these different spaces. With terminology and foundational knowledge varying across each area, she's learnt that understanding comes from patience and trust. Her fascination with discovering new things certainly helps too. She brings a multilingual background to the table, using her fluency in English, Polish and Spanish to navigate the global world of science, and to communicate effectively across cultures and collaborators.

This indoor air quality work is slow, deeply careful, and totally evidence-based. Gradually, Lidia is working to make the air we breathe cleaner and healthier.

Through building better new buildings, or retrofitting older ones, we can improve global health through cleaner air. It's thanks to the work of Lidia and her teams that the air we breathe is getting safer over time.

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An unsurpassed global authority on airborne particles, Professor Morawska has redefined the application of air pollution science and translated it into irrefutable evidence and paradigm-shifting advice to government and intergovernmental bodies ...

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