



**CITATION FOR PROFESSOR LEO TAN WEE HIN**  
**OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARD**

A marine biologist by training, teacher at heart, and champion of a thousand green causes in a career that spans 50 years, Professor Leo Tan Wee Hin has served the cause of Singapore on hundreds of fronts.

Starting his career at the then University of Singapore, the outstanding teacher and researcher was asked to serve as Director of a growing Singapore Science Centre. He did so for about a decade, from 1982 to 1991, transforming it into an international centre of excellence for science education, widely disseminating knowledge in science and technology to all sectors of the community. Leo then helmed the National Institute of Education for another decade, from 1994 to 2006, growing an already reputable teacher education institute into an organisation of international acclaim, excelling in teacher education, school leadership, and both content and pedagogical research. Leo also served as Chairman of the National Parks Board from 1998 to 2007, steering the organisation towards a vision of sustainable green future for Singapore through the concept of “City in a Garden”.

Leo’s return to NUS in 2008 as Director of Special Projects in NUS Faculty of Science

coincided with the start of a series of major developments which he helmed for the University. He initiated a unique joint Master's degree between NUS and the Australian National University in Science Communication, as well as the Singapore Science Centre. At the same time, Leo saw the need for an interdisciplinary environmental undergraduate programme in NUS and Singapore. The result was the Bachelor of Environmental Studies, a programme he put together and directed from start to fruition. With his management skills, academic gravitas and strong networking, NUS was able to persuade a diversity of institutional chiefs, discipline experts, leaders and players in NUS, private industry and government sectors to support this programme. His contribution not only placed NUS on the map for environmental and sustainability education internationally, it also left a lasting legacy for Singapore. Leo also worked tirelessly to establish chaired professorships on biodiversity and research for the University.

On the management front, Leo played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum. He saw the need for such a museum even before his return to NUS, and set the stage for its establishment. Tasked to fulfil Singapore's dream for a natural history museum, Leo conceived a vision, carried out the mission and created an outcome for what a natural history museum must be and do. He led the project team to finalise a concept and then set out to raise a staggering \$56 million for a new building within seven months — on the back of an economic meltdown. He also helped raise an additional \$12 million to purchase a family of three dinosaurs and set up the eventual display. Leo supervised the project from architecture to finance and research to ensure the new museum was developed according to national and NUS requirements; and also oversaw the relocation of the old collections. The Museum was launched on 18 April 2015 by Singapore President and NUS Chancellor Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam.

In July 2015, a sperm whale was washed up on Singapore's shores. To ensure that the specimen was not lost, Leo initiated and coordinated multiagency as well as ministerial support for immediate unprecedented action to secure the whale for Singapore and its Jubilee Year celebrations. He then chaired a new fundraising team, raising more than \$1 million to build a new exhibit as well as set up a research and education fund for marine biodiversity at NUS. Through his persevering efforts, Singapore now has our very own Jubilee whale, on display at the Museum.

We are indeed indebted to Leo for his wise stewardship, magnanimity and dedication to NUS.

Leo has also been instrumental in planning and leading two major research projects for Singapore. One was on Singapore's first landfill at Pulau Semakau — a research survey on the biodiversity of the mangroves, intertidal zone, seagrass beds and all the flora and fauna therein. The second was a comprehensive marine biodiversity survey of Singapore's coastal environment.

He further championed the publication of the *Encyclopedia of Singapore Biodiversity* – a groundbreaking comprehensive compendium of the island's biodiversity – being involved from sponsorship to project supervision, even editing and writing many parts of the book himself.

On the service front, Leo was recently appointed Board Member of Mandai Safari Park Holdings, which is tasked with developing a new eco-attraction for Singapore.

Internationally, he holds several key positions. As Governor, Asia-Europe Foundation since 2009, Leo remains a key player for both continents with regard to relationships and collaborations. In addition, he is the chairman of the Pacific Science Association Committee for Education.

For these reasons and more, Professor Leo Tan is a most deserving recipient of the Outstanding Service Award.