



UN Tourism Ulysses Prize Award Ceremony (17th Edition)

University of Technology Sydney

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Introductory Remarks

Words of Appreciation

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, we gather to celebrate the lifetime achievements of one of tourism's most distinguished academics, Larry Dwyer. On behalf of the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization and the Ulysses Coordinating Committee, I warmly welcome all participants to this special occasion.

Our sincere thanks go to Professor Andrew Parfitt, Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), and to the academic team for graciously hosting the 17th Ulysses Award Ceremony. Let me acknowledge the presence of Professor Sara Denize, Dean of Business at the UTS. Special appreciation is extended to Professor Carmel Foley, Deputy Head of Management at the UTS Business School, and to Ece Kaya, a member of her academic team, for their steadfast support and commitment.

Celebrating here, in the very university where the laureate has taught for many years, adds immense value and emotional significance. The University of Technology Sydney has earned a stellar reputation for research excellence and innovation, consistently ranking highly on national and global scales. Its Sustainability Strategy 2030, aiming for net-zero carbon emissions and embedding sustainability across teaching and research, is equally commendable.

The Significance of the Ulysses Prize and Honouring the 2025 Laureate

Distinguished Guests,

The Ulysses Prize is the highest academic honour in tourism within our Organization and across the United Nations system. Since its inception in 2003, it aims to bridge theory and practice, fostering the creation and application of innovative knowledge. Seventeen of the world's highly regarded academics have now been honoured with this prestigious distinction.

Organized with transparency and rigour, the candidatures are evaluated by former Ulysses Laureates according to eleven detailed academic criteria. The process is overseen by the Ulysses Committee, which includes Ulysses Laureates and Professors Emeriti Donald Hawkins, Jafar Jafari, and David Airey, with myself serving ex officio.

It is with great pride that we announce the winner of the 2025 Ulysses Prize — Professor Larry Dwyer, a true icon of travel and tourism. His work in tourism economics and policy, destination competitiveness, and sustainable tourism development has inspired generations of professionals and shaped innovative approaches among policymakers and industry leaders alike.

International Tourism and Australia as a Catalyst of Sustainability

Dear Friends,

The latest World Tourism Barometer shows international arrivals up by 5% in the first quarter of 2025, surpassing pre-pandemic levels by 3%. UN Tourism projects further growth of 3–5% by the end of the year. In 2024, global tourism rebounded to around 1.5 billion visitors, while export revenues from international tourism reached a record USD 2 trillion — an 11% rise from 2023 and 15% above 2019.

Challenges such as climate change, geopolitical uncertainty, and macroeconomic fluctuations persist. Yet, demand continues to grow, and emerging tools like Artificial Intelligence are transforming supplier operations, customer service, data analytics, governance, and consumer behaviour. The latest UN Tourism survey confirms that

human capital development is one of the top priorities for Member States, highlighting the need to modernize tourism education for resilience and competitiveness.

Australia stands out as a catalyst for sustainable tourism. Its 'Thrive 2030 Strategy' strengthens the visitor economy through partnerships, innovation, and diversified offerings, while the 'Visitor Economy Strategy 2035' provides a leading example of Sydney as a growing sustainable visitor economy.

Bridging Academic Research and the Future of the Industry

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the face of global challenges, the role of academic research has never been more vital. It is time to turn knowledge into action, making research a cornerstone of strategic decision-making.

While impressive figures such as 1.5 billion international arrivals and record revenues motivate us, urgent questions remain. What will be the consequences of climate change as an existential threat, and how can we promote climate-friendly travel for current and future generations? How can destinations strengthen crisis preparedness against natural and man-made disasters as well as health emergencies? Are issues like overtourism driven by demand, poor coordination, or weak management? Is tourism properly placed in national, regional, and local agendas as a driver of employment, inclusive growth, and community well-being? Why is there a persistent gap between evolving industry needs and current curricula, and how can we establish an effective system of tourism education alongside robust human capital development policies? How should destinations adapt branding and marketing strategies in an unpredictable global environment?

The answer to these complex questions is clear: the future of our global sector relies on collaboration, with academic research playing an essential role. It is time to rethink traditional partnerships and build an effective and innovative Public-Private-Academia partnership model to guide evidence-based decision-making grounded in research findings for the long-term sustainability and resilience of the tourism sector.

UN Tourism as a Global Forum for Knowledge Creation

Dear Participants,

The World Tourism Organization is a Specialized Agency of the United Nations dedicated to responsible, sustainable, and universally accessible tourism. With 161 Member States, 6 Associate Members, and over 500 Affiliate Members, including leading industry stakeholders and universities, UN Tourism provides a platform for dialogue, partnerships, and policy guidance.

The latest survey among Member States shows that ‘knowledge creation’ and ‘advocacy’ remain the highest priorities, with 90% rating them as crucial for the Organization’s work and future development. Through its quality-oriented and geographically balanced strategy, UN Tourism continues to expand its network of Affiliate Members and welcomes interested institutions to join.

The Enduring Legacy of the Ulysses Prize

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The end of the 20th century and the start of the 21st brought a technological revolution that rapidly transformed the aviation, hospitality, and tourism industries. It was during this period that our Ulysses Laureates made invaluable contributions, profoundly influencing the development of new business and governance models in the tourism industry worldwide. Their scholarly work continues to shape thinking, foster innovation, and guide policy and practice across the global tourism community.

I would like to once again underscore that the Ulysses Prize stands as the highest academic distinction in tourism within the United Nations system. Let us now pay tribute to all the laureates — distinguished scholars who have received this honour from 2003 to the present:

1. Donald Hawkins, George Washington University, 2003
2. J.R. Brent Ritchie, University of Calgary, 2004
3. Jafar Jafari, University of Wisconsin–Stout, 2005
4. David Airey, University of Surrey, 2006

5. Bernard Morucci, University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne – 2007
6. Pauline Sheldon, University of Hawaii, 2008
7. Chris Cooper, University of Surrey, 2009
8. Kaye Chon, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 2011
9. Erik Cohen, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2012
10. Tej Vir Singh, Centre for Tourism Research & Development, 2013
11. Eduardo Fayos-Solà, University of Valencia, 2014
12. Richard Butler, University of Strathclyde, 2015
13. Geoffrey Wall, University of Waterloo, 2016
14. Valene L. Smith, California State University, 2018
15. Susanne Becken, Griffith University, 2019
16. Jigang Bao, Sun Yat-sen University, 2023
17. Larry Dwyer, University of Technology Sydney, 2025

Thank you!