



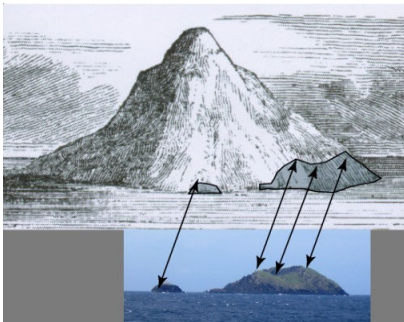
# FRIDAY ENVIRONMENT FORUM

## NPA Environment Centre

### 12 August 2016

#### Indigenous stories of abruptly sinking islands in the Southwest Pacific and their geological explanations

This week's guest speaker at Friday Environment Forum on 12 August is **Patrick D. Nunn**, Professor of Geography at the University of the Sunshine Coast. He spent 25 years at the University of the South Pacific, an international university serving 12 Pacific Island nations, during the course of which he and his students collected numerous oral traditions about extreme events both geological and climatic.



The people of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu have rich bodies of oral traditions that include stories about islands that are said to have disappeared abruptly beneath the ocean surface. Indigenous myths and stories about abrupt island sinking were once regarded as fictitious but have now drawn attention to a real geological phenomenon.

Ritter Island (North East of New Guinea) before and after a collapse in 1888

Having occupied these islands continuously for more than 3000 years, people have inevitably adjusted to a level of calamity that might have proven unbearable for populations elsewhere in the world. The ways in which stories about such calamities are told and rationalized are key to understanding indigenous attitudes and coping strategies.

Examples of sunken islands, once inhabited, in the central Solomon Islands focus on the stories about Teonimanu that is likely to have disappeared around 300 years ago. From the islands of Vanuatu, two groups of sunken islands are discussed: one off the east coast of Malakula Island, the other (named Vanua Mamata) near the southern tip of Pentecost Island. In both locations, gravity sliding, earthquake-induced sliding and flank volcanism are implicated in abrupt island disappearance. Mention is also made of the better-documented disappearance of Kuwae Island (central Vanuatu) during an explosive volcanic eruption about AD 1453. Oral traditions give insights into the nature and frequency of such events.

Everyone is welcome to attend Friday Environment Forum which starts at 10.30 am on August 12. As Professor Nunn is a popular speaker be sure to arrive early at the Noosa Parks Association Environment Centre, 5 Wallace Drive Noosaville to secure your seats. Friday Environment Forum commences at 10.30am although everyone is welcome to arrive at 10am when coffee and chat are on offer. For those interested in an interpretive birding walk before the forum, meet Valda in the Environment Centre car park at 8.30am.



Karua 1971 Eruption

**All welcome.**