

PROFESSOR DONALD EDGAR PATERSON

1935-2021



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It was with great sadness that his colleagues learned of the passing of Emeritus Professor Donald Paterson on 29th March at his home in the Teouma Valley. He was affectionately known as ‘Don’ to his colleagues and ‘Professor Don’ to his students.

Don was born, brought up and educated in New Zealand before he undertook post-graduate work at Yale University in the United States of America. Returning to New Zealand, he followed his first academic love of public, constitutional and administrative law. After a short period in practice, he taught as the law faculties of the Victoria University of Wellington and Otago University in Dunedin.

Don brought these subjects to USP in 1979, at a time when the University did not yet have a law program. He was appointed as a Professor of Public Administration at USP Laucala Campus in 1979 and later became the Head of the School of Social and Economic Development. Professor Don later became a Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University.

In 1985, Don moved to Vanuatu as Director of the USP Pacific Law Unit, which was a training unit for Magistrates. In 1994, the University established the School of Law. Don played an integral role in the establishment and development of the School over the next 26 years.

In 1997, Don was awarded the distinction of Emeritus Professor of the University upon his retirement. He continued to be actively involved with the School of Law, both teaching and researching. He also contributed his experience and wisdom in service to the School, including periods as Acting Head of the School and Acting Director of Emalus Campus. Don also made extensive contribution to the Journal of South Pacific Law (JSPL) as author of multiple texts and at times as Editor General and or member of the Editorial Board.

Don was a leading authority on the laws and legal systems of Pacific Island countries and was often engaged as a consultant by the Governments of Vanuatu and other pacific nations. His roles included serving as Chair of the Vanuatu Land Management Planning Committee. In 2012, he was awarded a Meritorious Service Medal by the Vanuatu Government

Don published extensively on South Pacific law, including co-authoring texts on *Introduction to South Pacific Law*, *South Pacific Property Law* and *South Pacific Island Land Systems*. In 2018, he published a collection of customs, *Traditional and Contemporary Customs of the Islands of Vanuatu*.

Professor Donald Paterson inspired law students and legal professionals from across the Pacific region. He will be remembered as a fine scholar, a wonderful colleague and teacher, and a great friend of Vanuatu.