

# NEPTUNE TALKS

a series of online scientific lectures



**Dr. Piers Larcombe**

University of Western Australia, AU

## **Sedimentary processes and sedimentology help test whether coastal archaeological artefact scatters are underwater and in situ, NW Australia**

Thousands of Underwater Cultural Heritage (UCH) sites have been documented in the world but until recently, none on Australia's inner shelf. Starting in 2019, a series of publications have described the first Australian in-situ UCH sites in the Dampier Archipelago, arguing that the stone artefact scatters are underwater, (some) are in situ, are at least 7000 years old, and are now submerged because of post-glacial sea-level rise.

This talk analyses these claims using a sedimentological approach, arriving at a reassessment of the sites' sedimentary settings and therefore the significance of the archaeological finds. The finds are clearly lithic cultural artefacts, but the arguments for their sites being of primary context and reflecting early Holocene land surfaces are mistaken. Rather, these sites occur in the intertidal zone, and many or all artefacts are likely to have been reworked.

Such sites of secondary context, if treated appropriately, can inform our understanding of site-formation process and change, and may support more powerful contributions to submerged archaeology than attempts to seek the first or the oldest.

The work will be published in *Geoarchaeology* shortly.

**20 June, 10:00 am CEST (Rome Time)**

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