

Lost continent close to being recognised

Geologists claim that a huge landmass almost entirely submerged in the southwest Pacific, is distinct enough to constitute a separate continent. At five million square kilometres, Zealandia would be the world's smallest continent



Bruce Luyendyk

Geophysicist coined term **Zealandia** in 1995, when it was thought to meet three of the four thresholds required for continent status

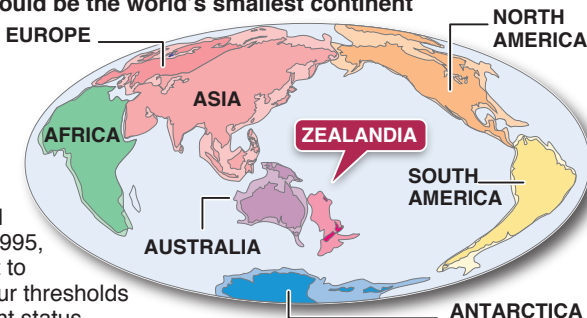
New study using satellite technology and gravity maps of sea floor revealed Zealandia is large unified area, fulfilling all four requirements

CRITERIA

- ☒ High elevation relative to surrounding area
- ☒ Distinctive geology
- ☒ Crust thicker compared with surrounding ocean floor
- ☒ Well-defined area

ZEALANDIA

- Measures 4.9 million sq km, about two thirds of Australia
- 94% of area is underwater
- Believed to have broken away from ancient supercontinent **Gondwana** and sank between 60 and 85 million years ago



- Continental crust limits
- Active plate boundary

