



Centro Population Survey 2026

Lead Agency: Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS)

Funding: \$250,888.00

Start Date: 1 April 2026 End Date: 30 October 2027

Status: CURRENT

Aims and Objectives:

The aim of this project is to complete an assessment of the longspined sea urchin population and its impact on inshore reefs of eastern Tasmania.

The objectives are

1. Estimate the population size and biomass of longspined sea urchin off eastern Tasmania.
2. Determine the extent of longspined sea urchin barrens and assess changes relative to urchin fishing pressure.
3. Update longspined sea urchin population models and future projections under a range of fishing pressures.
4. Evaluate how changing urchin distributions are impacting abalone.

This project is a resurvey of longspined sea urchin populations along the Tasmanian east coast, which were first surveyed in 2001/02. It will provide an update of spatially robust data on abundance and biomass estimates across 9 east coast regions (Eddystone to St Helens), as well as the current extent of sea urchin barrens. Population models will be updated to assess the impact of urchin fishing by region and allow for future scenario testing of fishing pressure required to control urchins. This survey is important as it will be the first survey encompassing a period of sustained urchin fishing pressure.

This information is essential for evaluating the effectiveness of current management actions, particularly the incentivised commercial harvest program and targeted removals, as well as for assessing where urchin densities are approaching critical thresholds associated with barren formation. A new survey will also strengthen adaptive management by informing future adaption of incentivised harvest programs and targeted removals. Further, it will improve the accuracy of population models that underpin long-term decision-making.

Results of the project could also provide further support for a push towards national action via the Centro Business Plan as recommended by the Federal Government senate Inquiry.