

Abalone Industry Reinvestment Fund (AIRF)

Updated: February 2024

Longspined sea urchin on Tasmania's East Coast: an education and engagement program

Lead Agency: Natural Resource Management South (NRM South)

Funding: \$139,050.00

Start Date: 1 July 2023 End Date: 30 June 2024

Status: CURRENT

Aims and Objectives:

The project aims to:

- a) Measurably improve Tasmanian community knowledge and understanding of temperate reef ecology; the long-spined sea urchin, abalone, and ecosystem interactions; and the role of the commercial dive sector in ecosystem management;
- b) Measurably improve general identification skills between sea urchin species in Tasmanian marine waters;
- c) Build a coordinated approach to data management between community groups, researchers, and fisheries managers through strategic community engagement; and
- d) Provide a coordinated approach to agreed key messaging and connect education and engagement activities across different agencies and stakeholders.

Progress Report:

A quantitative study was conducted via an online survey during December 2023 with 321 total completed responses.

Qualified participants were defined as Tasmanian residents, aged 18+ years and living in the nominated local government areas.

Overall, there was a moderate level of awareness, knowledge and understanding of the longspined sea urchin among the survey group.

Around 37% of the overall survey group were able to identify the longspined sea urchin as an issue. When prompted, a total of 63% of participants had heard of this species, indicating a high level of basic awareness in the Tasmanian community.

The longspined sea urchin is primarily perceived as 'invasive' and 'damaging'. When presented with statements about the sea urchins, a substantial proportion expressed uncertainty in their views, potentially demonstrating a cohort open to an education program.