

Abalone Industry Reinvestment Fund (AIRF)

Undertake a feasibility study into long-spined sea urchin removal program by volunteers

Lead Agency: NRM (South)

Funding: \$45,000

Start Date: 1 October 2021

End Date: 31 March 2022

Status: COMPLETED

Aims and Objectives:

Community interest and support to address the challenge of the long-spined sea urchin is both encouraging for ecosystem restoration, and an opportunity for social participation. To add-value to the broader control effort, a framework in which volunteers can participate in the eradication of the long-spined sea urchin will be developed. It will consider:

- Resource decision making, targets and stakeholder engagement
- Spatial and temporal planning
- Community and volunteer education in species identification and control methods
- Liability, indemnity and insurances of volunteer dive organisations and individuals
- Monitoring, reporting and evaluation

Final Report:

Click here for [Final Report](#)

A high value commercial market has been established for the long-spined sea urchin, with commercial divers harvesting and profiting from the resource. Volunteer divers have also expressed interest in restoring ecosystem function through control activities. Anecdotally, recreational divers have already participated in restoration activities although the effort is unmonitored and unregulated. Community interest and support to address the challenge of the long-spined sea urchin is both encouraging for ecosystem restoration, and an opportunity for social participation.

To determine the feasibility of volunteer urchin management program (VUMP), NRM South invited Marine Solutions Tasmania Pty Ltd (Marine Solutions) to investigate legislative requirements, insurance options, undertake stakeholder engagement and explore options for program structure. The scope of Marine Solutions report extends to

a feasibility assessment for a coordinated volunteer program to support the removal of long-spined sea urchins from discrete areas of coastline of Tasmania. The report examines risks, mitigations, liability, indemnity and insurances for program development and delivery. It is noted that the authors of the document are not legal or insurance experts (however legal experts have been consulted in the compiling of this information). Information provided in the report has been compiled using resources including literature review, stakeholder consultation and consultation with legal experts.

The feasibility study found that a VUMP in Tasmania is feasible, if adequate measures are taken to ensure the program is safe, minimises overlap with the commercial sector and has manageable and realistic goals.

A possible framework for developing and delivering a VUMP, as defined in the initial scope of this project, has been provided. It should be noted that the stakeholder engagement process has revealed that a VUMP approach is not endorsed by the Tasmanian Commercial Dive Association (TCDA) due to perceived and potential risk to brand and market. The TCDA requests and should be considered as a delivery coordinator for urchin management in areas of high recreational dive value and where there is no commercial focus.

To implement a VUMP it is critical that a management approach be decided. Once established, the approach taken will inform legislative health and safety requirements, including duty of care, and inform insurance options. It is recommended that a thorough risk assessment of a VUMP is conducted should a program proceed to development.

If executed with consideration to the findings of this report, a VUMP could be valuable tool which builds social participation to address changes in the marine environment with outcomes for biodiversity in high value recreational areas in Tasmanian marine waters.