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Guy Barnett, Minister for Primary Industries and Water

Abalone industry tackles thorny issue

The Hodgman majority Liberal Government is tackling the long spined sea urchin (*Centrostephanus rodgersii*), which attacks our east coast reefs and threatens the commercial, recreational and indigenous fisheries that depend on them.

Funding for the first round of projects under the Abalone Industry Reinvestment Fund (AIRF) has been announced, with a focus on projects that increase the sustainability of the abalone fishery and address the impacts of the long-spined sea urchin.

The Government worked with industry to establish the \$5.1 million, 5-year AIRF by diverting a portion of royalties to support industry-led projects.

This season, thanks to the AIRF, 540 tonnes of urchin have been removed from the highly valued rocky reef habitat on Tasmania's east coast, almost triple the amount removed in the previous year.

Projects selected for support include:

- Community education on the long spined sea urchin threat;
- Assessing options for deep water control;
- Monitoring and measures to drive efficiency;
- Finding other uses for the urchins, particularly for the waste material;
- Identifying urchin larval dispersal patterns to better target eradication efforts;
- Assessing recovery rates for kelp beds following urchin eradication;
- Assessing the differences in efficiency between harvesting and culling and
- Supporting research into the resettlement of abalone larvae to further improve abalone stocks.

The AIRF has also allocated funding support to the CSIRO in developing a long-term strategic response plan for long spined sea urchin.

The Hodgman majority Liberal Government is also maintaining funding to the Abalone Industry Development Trust Fund with \$800,000 over four years to help enable the wild abalone industry to develop new market opportunities and increase the value of the catch.

These commitments are part of the Government's \$26 million plan to help build our sustainable seafood sector and support stronger regional economies.