

# HAYES SEAFOODS PTY LTD

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## **Inquiry: The Climate-Related Marine Invasive Species**

The black long spine sea urchin is a under fished resource and the number one treat to our eastern zone (VIC) abalone fishery through the loss of productive habitat. There are 6 sea urchin licences in our area and historically, these entitlement holders have not once fully caught their quotas. Currently the urchin fishery is under review but the VFA's proposal of giving these entitlement holders additional quotas seems ludicrous and an injustice to all other fisheries relying on the urchin harvesting sector to manage this pest species. There needs to be more licences introduced and no quotas.

The last 3 years has seen our eastern zone cease its highly successful sea urchin culling program, in a hope that the sea urchin harvesting sector will be able to take over. This has not been the case. As a second-generation abalone diver, working family licence A57, I feel that even maintaining our quota as is, is simply not good enough. With over 10 years of consecutive quota cuts and a loss of quota by over a quarter, we should be aiming to see our quota increase again. This is not ever going to happen without large scale removal of long spine sea urchin. I do not believe the proposed sea urchin management review will facilitate that but instead add further disincentive to potential sea urchin divers.

I believe that this proposal will add further disincentive to potential sea urchin harvesters, adding additional costs to purchasing an annual access licence and then also having to lease quota. The sea urchin fishery should be and really needs be an owner operated fishery.

Having large quotas, controlled by a small few, for long spine sea urchin that remains uncaught is already having devastating consequences. It is a unique fishery in that leaving uncaught (sea urchin) quota in the water does affect other fisheries. Whether or not these sea urchins can be controlled through harvesting or not, remains to be seen. History shows that it cannot and we really do not have the luxury to wait to see further. Entire productive abalone reefs have lost in the last 2 decades and will continue to do so without urgent change. One way or another, more urchins need to be coming out of the water, either through harvesting or culling.

I would suspect every abalone licence holder in our eastern zone would not like to see us on 10 tonne quotas but I fear this is where we will be in the next few years without effective change. The sea urchin industry in eastern zone Victoria is a developing fishery of a underfished pest species. Leaving black long spine sea urchins in the water devalues other fisheries through loss of habitat. The same cannot be said about abalone.

Long spine urchin quota cannot be sat on and remain uncaught in a hope that one day the value will improve. The success of this sea urchin management review is of upmost concern to myself, as it directly affects our abalone resource, while also having the power to be a potential remedy.

I hope that my submission to this inquiry is taken seriously.

sincerely,  
Gavin Hayes

Hayes Seafoods Director