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## Booming Port Phillip Bay sea urchins here to stay without drastic action

Monitoring of sea urchins in Port Phillip Bay over a 4-year period has revealed that booming urchin populations and the barren grounds they created by overgrazing kelp beds are likely to persist in the long term unless drastic action is taken.

High density populations of the Australian urchin *Centrostephanos rodgersi* have been monitored in Port Phillip Bay

"While it takes many urchins to create a barren they can be maintained by relatively few, and the rate of juvenile recruitment on established barrens is high.

"To restore kelp beds almost all of the urchins need to be removed on a broad scale, as culling just large urchins in localised barrens, for example, simply leads to faster recruitment and growth of juvenile urchins.

"Quicklime is currently being used in Norway to cull urchins across all size ranges and we are also exploring this approach on extensive barren grounds in Tasmania, where an estimated