Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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First global study of kelp forest change gives mixed news on key marine ecosystem

IMAS scientists have joined researchers from around the world to provide the first global picture of how kelp forests have changed over the last 50 years in response to stresses caused by human activity.

Conducted by an international team of 37 scientists who analysed trends from 1138 sites across 35 regions, including Tasmania, the study found that, in contrast to global declines in corals and seagrasses, kelp forests have proved surprisingly resilient in some areas.

IMAS

"A whole forest of giant kelp can disappear in a season, and it is tempting to overreact to such dramatic change," Florida State University Andrew Rassweiler said.

"This study presents important context for such changes; kelp can recover just as fast, and all these rapid local dynamics have added up to relative stability at the global scale over recent decades," Dr Rassweiler said.

given

their high productivity and importance in supporting marine biodiversity, it is certainly a serious concern that decline in kelp was observed at 38% of the sites examined,