

Thursday 20 September

"Coral-dominated reefs certainly aren't undertaking a widespread takeover of Tasmanian reefs, but we are seeing the local emergence of these unique high-latitude coral communities."

Dr Ling said this form of 'tropicalisation' of a temperate ecosystem was not restricted to Tasmania.

"The diversity and productivity of kelp systems is under threat in many locations in Australia and globally as a result of climate change.

"Routine monitoring of temperate reefs at more than 200 sites spanning southern Australia has been undertaken since 1992 through the Australian Temperate Reef Collaboration, led by IMAS scientists Professor Graham Edgar and Associate Professor Neville Barrett and involving natural resource managers from five states.

"Data from this collective monitoring effort shows that local dominance of corals is more likely with increasing sea surface temperatures, plus increasing numbers of herbivorous fishes and sea urchins, both of which consume kelp.

"Investigation of the coral phenomenon in north east Tasmania has revealed sea urchin herbivory to be a key process giving rise to local dominance of corals as waters warm under climate change," Dr Ling said.

Media contact: Andrew Rhodes (03) 6226 6683, email: ajrhodes@utas.edu.au

Information released by:

Communications and Media Office

University of Tasmania

+61 3 6226 2124

Media.Office@utas.edu.au [Twitter.com/utas_newsroom](https://twitter.com/utas_newsroom)