### Background

Three species of the genus *Austrocylindropuntia* are recorded as naturalised in South Africa: *A. cylindrica* (Lam.) Backeb., *A. subulata* (Meuhlenpf.) Backeb. and *A. vestita* (Salm-Dyck) Backeb. These species are originally from Argentina and Bolivia and are recorded as naturalised in other countries like Australia. In South Africa only *A. cylindrica* (Lam.) Backeb., *A. subulata* (Meuhlenpf.) Backeb are listed as invasive. The first record of a naturalised population of *Austrocylindropuntia vestita* in South Africa was recorded in February 2016 in the Little Karro in the Western Cape South Africa (Smith & Figueiredo, 2016). New records of naturalised population are now recorded in the Eastern Cape. The invasive status of this species needs to be assessed.

A student project aims to investigate the invasive status of *Austrocylindropuntia vestita* by determining the current and potential distribution, the extent of invasion, the risk posed by this species, and to determine the eradication feasibility and management strategies for this species.

If eradication is not possible then biological control would be the most appropriate management strategy for *Austrocylindropuntia* species. There are biological control agents that are already used for the control of close relatives of *Austrocylindropuntia* species, such as the cochineal insect *Dactylopius tomentosus* which is an effective agent for two invasive alien species of *Cylindropuntia*. It is possible that the agents for *Cylindropuntia* could be effective in controlling *Austrocylindropuntia* species but the impact that they will have is not known. The potential for these biocontrol agents to impact *Austrocylindropuntia* species should be investigated.

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### Further Reading