



Pest risk assessment

Eve's pin cactus (*Austrocylindropuntia* species)

This publication has been compiled by Caitlin Davies of Biosecurity Queensland, Department of Primary Industries.

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Summary

This study assessed the potential for *Austrocyllindropuntia* species to become invasive pests in Queensland. It used an evidence-based approach to pest risk assessment, where published information on a taxa's biology, ecology and history as a pest elsewhere was used to make reasonable predictions of potential impact and probability of naturalisation in Queensland.

The genus *Austrocyllindropuntia* contains seven species that are native to alpine regions of South America. The species are typically found in the Andes at high altitudes in seasonally-dry tropical forests and scrub vegetation habitats. Naturalised populations of *Austrocyllindropuntia* species have been recorded in coastal, grassland, disturbed and savannah habitats in a range of climates and elevations.

To date, *A. cylindrica*, *A. exaltata*, *A. shaferi*, *A. subulata* and *A. vestita* have naturalised at numerous locations across the world, including Africa, Australia, Europe and South America. Other species may have the potential to naturalise if offered the opportunity.

Austrocyllindropuntia cylindrica and *A. subulata* have naturalised in parts of Australia but to date, are not known to have naturalised in Queensland.

Austrocyllindropuntia species are popular ornamental cacti, and many forms and varieties are available within the plant trade.

Based on the evidence at-hand, it seems reasonable to conclude that *Austrocyllindropuntia* species pose a high-risk over substantial areas of Queensland. This conclusion is based on the following factors:

- Evidence of escaping cultivation and naturalising outside its native range
- Propensity to form thickets
- Tolerates a range of habitat types
- Closely related to other highly invasive *Opuntia*/*Cylindropuntia* spp.
- Spreads vegetatively and by seeds
- It has sharp, barbed spines that can harm people, wildlife and livestock.

The weed risk of *Austrocyllindropuntia* appears comparable to *Cylindropuntia* and *Opuntia* as the taxa share similar biological and ecological traits.

Based on the evidence collected in this assessment, *Austrocyllindropuntia* species appear to be a worthy candidate for preventative control.

*Important note: This assessment is based on the best available literature at the time of writing. It is acknowledged that new information may come to hand over time and please send any additional information, or advice on errors, to the author.

Identity and taxonomy

Family: Cactaceae

Genus: *Austrocyllindropuntia*

Species (common name):

Austrocyllindropuntia cylindrica (Lam.) Backeb. (cane cactus)

Austrocyllindropuntia exaltata (A.Berger) Backeb. (long-spine cactus)

Austrocyllindropuntia floccosa (Salm-Dyck) F.Ritter. (waraqu)

Austrocyllindropuntia pachypus (K.Schum.) Backeb.

Austrocyllindropuntia shaferi (Britton & Rose) Backeb.

Austrocyllindropuntia subulata (Muehlenpf.) Backeb. (Eve's pin cactus)

Austrocyllindropuntia risk assessment

Austrocyllindropuntia vestita (Salm-Dyck) Backeb. (old man opuntia)

The genus is part of the subfamily Opuntioideae of the Cactaceae family and refers to a group of cacti native to South America. Species within this genus have previously been placed in *Opuntia* then transferred to *Cylindropuntia* and transferred again to *Austrocyllindropuntia* (Kiesling 1980).

The taxonomy of the genus *Austrocyllindropuntia* is subject to much debate and inconsistency (Christian & Loaiza 2023). This assessment comprises the seven accepted *Austrocyllindropuntia* species listed by World Flora Online (WFO 2024).

Further detail on each species taxonomy is provided in the [Appendix](#).

Forms and cultivars

There are many forms and cultivars of *Austrocyllindropuntia* species worldwide. In the ornamental trade the names 'Eve's needle cactus' or 'Eve's pin cactus' are most commonly used (Pasicznik 2019). The generic term 'awl cactus' or 'long-spined cactus' is used for all *Austrocyllindropuntia* species (Pasicznik 2019).

The different forms and cultivars include:

- Crested Eve's needle 'cristata' form (North Carolina Extension n.d.)
 - crested form
 - stems fan outwards into wavy shapes
 - topped with combs of long succulent leaves.
- Christmas tree cactus 'montrosa' form (NSWDPI 2024)
 - Up to 4m tall
 - absent or small (1.5cm long) spines
 - shorter leaves (up to 5cm) and yellow, red or pink not just green
 - flowers and fruit are red
- 'Gumby' or 'Gumbi' form (North Carolina Extension n.d.)
 - Dwarf cactus
 - Twisted, contorted growth
 - Branches with side arms
 - Yellow spines

Description

The genus *Austrocyllindropuntia* is described below by Chinnock 2015.

"Erect spreading loosely branched shrubs or more rarely cushion-like or small trees to 5 m tall. Roots tuberous. **Stems** cylindrical, of indefinite growth or sometimes forming segments, glabrous or hairy, tuberculate; tubercles elongate to ovate-rhomboid, rib-like, slightly raised. **Leaves** linear-terete or subterete and distinctly flattened above, deciduous or persistent. **Areoles** terminal on tubercles, subcircular to rhomboid, slightly depressed or raised, clothed in fine white to pale yellow woolly hairs and scattered, rarely numerous, long spreading, straight or flexuose hairs, most obvious on young growth. **Spines** 1-10 per areole, spreading, often with one or more of the lower ones deflexed, flattened and sometimes twisted towards base; lacking a papery sheath. **Glochids** few and often wanting, scattered, white to pale yellow. **Flowers** lateral or sometimes terminal on branch, bisexual and radially symmetrical, more or less cup-shaped; outer tepals fleshy, forming a distinctive red-pink cap at bud stage; inner tepals pink to red, oblong to oblanceolate, obtuse, erect or slightly spreading. Stamens inserted in numerous rows. **Fruit** succulent, green to yellowish green, solitary or producing

small chains of up to 4 by proliferation, ovoid to obovoid or obloid, spineless or with a few weak spines especially on distal areoles. **Seeds** pale tan, subglobular to irregularly angular” Chinnock 2015.

Austrocylindropuntia species are similar in appearance to *Cylindropuntia* species. A key differentiating feature of *Austrocylindropuntia* species is the absence of the papery sheath on the spine (Johnson *et al.* 2009). A summary of key features of each of the seven *Austrocylindropuntia* species is below. There is limited information available on many of these species as they are poorly studied in their native range.

Austrocylindropuntia cylindrica (Image 1)

Key features adapted from Chinnock 2015.

- Dark green shrub commonly 0.5-1 .5 m tall with branches 35-40 mm diameter
- Leaves only on new growth, deciduous, commonly 3-5 mm long, but up to 10 mm on regrowth
- Spines without a papery cover, 3-6 major ones per areole, 9-25 mm long, and 3-4 minor ones, to 5.5 mm long
- Flower bud with a very obvious hard red cap, flower red to red-orange
- Fruit usually solitary or in small chains of 2-4, 30-60 mm long, deep green to yellow-green

Austrocylindropuntia exaltata (Image 2)

Key features adapted from Lusweti *et al.* 2011.

- Spiny, multibranched shrub 2-5m tall
- Pale bluish green or grey in colouration
- Branches are curved, cylindrical, tuberculate with knobby projections
- Develops a trunk with age
- Leaves are elongated 30-60 or 120mm long, curved, fleshy and persistent
- Spines straight, yellow brown in colour, up to 5cm long and arise from the white woolly areoles in clusters of 1-3
- Flowers are terminal, orange or green yellow
- Fruit is green and pear shaped

Austrocylindropuntia floccosa (Image 3)

Key features adapted from LLIFLE - Encyclopedia of living forms 2025

- Groundcover cactus that forms a broad mat or compact cushions over 60cm in diameter
- Covered in dense long, woolly felt white hair
- Individual stem segments are cylindrical and up to 15cm long
- Spines are yellow
- Flowers are bright yellow
- Leaves are rudimentary, awl shaped, 7mm long and dark green

Austrocylindropuntia pachypus (Image 4)

Key features adapted from Charles 2016 & LLIFLE - Encyclopedia of living forms 2025

- Erect cactus with cylindrical stems up to 1m tall
- Typically solitary but can branch from the base
- New growth has small leaves that drop off in dry conditions
- Flowers are scarlet or orange and grow from the top of the stems
- Fruit can contain seeds but are often lacking
- Can produce a chain of fruits
- Crested form is common in cultivation

Austrocylindropuntia shaferi (Image 5)

Key features adapted from LLIFLE - Encyclopedia of living forms 2025 & Roberts 2006

- Moderately branched cactus that forms erect clumps about 50cm tall
- Stems cylindrical to subclavate, dark green and 15cm long.
- Areoles are 1cm apart, small, circular and white-felted.
- Covered in multiple 1cm long spines
- Leaves, deciduous, conical, 6mm long and dark green
- Flowers, red to pink
- Fruit red to purple and covered in spines

Austrocylindropuntia subulata (Image 6)

Key features adapted from Chinnock 2015:

- Robust shrub to 3 m with branches 40-50 mm diameter
- Leaves prominent, persistent, 18-120 mm long
- Spines without a papery cover, 1 per areole on new growth, additional smaller ones (up to 5) developing in successive years, mostly 35-70 mm long
- Flower pink
- Fruit large, solitary or in small chains of 2-4, 50-35 mm long, green

Austrocylindropuntia vestita (Image 7)

Key features adapted from LLIFLE - Encyclopedia of living forms 2025 & Smith & Figueiredo 2016:

- Perennial small to medium branching shrub
- Branches yellowish green, 40cm in length and 2cm wide
- Leaves subulate, small, persist for a time then shed, light yellowish green with reddish pink at tips
- Densely covered in long white hairs
- Short needle-like spines, 1.5cm long on areoles
- Branches are typically thinner than *A. subulata* and *A. cylindrica*
- Flowers bright orange to pinkish red tepals





Image 1. *Austrocyllindropuntia cylindrica* (cane cactus) A, flower buds and spines; B, flowers; C, habit. Photos by Ros Shepherd & Sheldon Navie NSW DPI.



Image 2. *Austrocyllindropuntia exaltata* (long-spine cactus) A, flowers; B flowers, leaves and spines; C habit. Photos by George Mungambi Lusweti et al. 2011.



Image 3. *Austrocyllindropuntia floccosa* (waraq) A, fruit; B flowers, and spines; C habit. Photos by Sebastián de Jesús Herrera Buenfil, Martin Vallejos & Wilder R. Quispe Rojas CC 4.0 iNaturalist via GBIF.



Image 4. *Austrocyllindropuntia pachypus* A, spines; B flowers and immature fruit; C habit. Photos by Jürgen Menzel by cacti guide & Martin Lowry & Rosario CC 4.0 iNaturalist via GBIF.



Image 5. *Austrocyllindropuntia shaferi* A, flowers; B fruit; C habit. Photos by Amira Oblitas Callisaya, Thomaz Ricardo Favreto Sinani & Ale Perez CC 4.0 iNaturalist via GBIF.



Image 6. *Austrocyllindropuntia subulata* (Eve's pin cactus) A, flowers; B habit; C spines. Photos by Bob Chinnock & Nicola Dixon NSW DPI.



Image 7. *Austrocyllindropuntia vestita* (old man opuntia) A, flowers; B spines; C habit. Photos by Chris Kettinger, Hugo Hulsberg & Shaun Swanepoel CC 4.0 iNaturalist via GBIF.

Reproduction, seed longevity and dispersal

Austrocyllindropuntia species can reproduce by sexual and asexual means. The main dispersal method of *Austrocyllindropuntia* species is by fragmentation of plant parts (Chinnock 2015). Stem segments, fallen flowers and immature fruit can produce roots within a few weeks (Chinnock 2015). Newly established plants can flower in two to four years (Chinnock 2015).

The seeds of *Austrocyllindropuntia* are hard and thick, typically germinating following rainfall and warm temperatures (Chinnock 2015). The seed can persist for many years (Chinnock 2015).

Austrocyllindropuntia subulata flowers are pollinated by insects (Chinnock 2015).

Austrocyllindropuntia cylindrica seeds are encased in a thick aril and germination in its native range is often poor (Loaiza 2017). It is not known if *Austrocyllindropuntia* species can produce fruit and viable seed in Australia. Similar to other opuntoid cacti, fragmentation of plant parts is the dominant dispersal method of *Austrocyllindropuntia* spp., even in its native range (Pasicznik 2019; Senanayaka & Senanayake 2024).

Pests and diseases

Austrocyllindropuntia species are within the host-range of the cactus moth (*Cactoblastis cactorum*) and cochineal insect (*Dactylopius tomentosus*) (Western Australian Herbarium 2025; Moran &

Zimmermann 1991). Both agents have been released to control cactus in Australia. It is not known if other cactus biocontrol agents will be effective on *Austrocylindropuntia* species.

Soft rot disease caused by *Klebsiella aerogenes* has been observed on *A. subulata* plants in Iran (Basavand *et al.* 2020). The bacterium *Klebsiella* is an increasingly important plant pathogen worldwide (Basavand *et al.* 2020).

Austrocylindropuntia species are hosts to the viral pathogen cactus virus X which infects various cacti including commercial dragon fruit (*Hylocereus spp.*) (Evallo *et al.* 2021).

Origin and distribution

Austrocylindropuntia species are native to the Andean regions in Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina and Chile of South America (Mauseth 2018; Nobel & Bobich 2002). In literature *Austrocylindropuntia* species native distribution is described as fragmented and often poorly defined (Ritz *et al.* 2012; ICUN n.d.). The species has been widely introduced and cultivated outside of its native range (Figure 1).

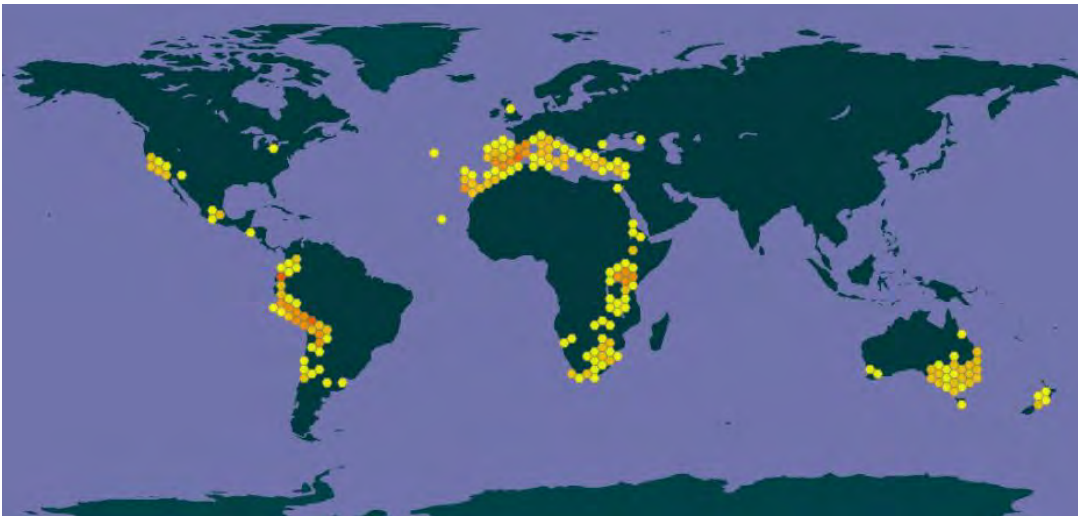


Figure 1. Global distribution of *Austrocylindropuntia* genus GBIF accessed 22/8/2025.

Austrocylindropuntia cylindrica

Austrocylindropuntia cylindrica is native to the central highlands of Ecuador and Peru (Chinnock 2015).

It has been introduced to Africa (Morocco & South Africa), Europe (France, Corsica, Italy, Sardinia, Spain, Canary Islands) and Oceania (Australia & New Zealand) (Chinnock 2015; Korotkova & Raab-Straube 2017; Novoa *et al.* 2014; Pasiecznik 2019a; Zengeya & Wilson 2020). The global distribution of *A. subulata* on GBIF can be found in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Global distribution of *Austrocylindropuntia cylindrica* from GBIF accessed 19/8/2025.

Austrocyllindropuntia exaltata

Austrocyllindropuntia exaltata is native to Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia in South America (Hyde et al. 2014).

It has been introduced to Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, possibly South Africa & Uganda) and Europe (Canary Islands) (Lusweti et al. 2011; Hyde 2014 & Korotkova & Raab-Straube 2017).

Austrocyllindropuntia floccosa

Austrocyllindropuntia floccosa is native to Peru and Bolivia in South America (POWO 2025).

This assessment could not find any records of the species outside of its native range.

Austrocyllindropuntia pachypus

Austrocyllindropuntia pachypus is native to Peru (Charles 2016).

This assessment could not find any records of the species outside of its native range.

Austrocyllindropuntia shaferi

Austrocyllindropuntia shaferi is native to Bolivia and northwest Argentina (POWO 2025).

It has possibly been introduced to the Canary Islands and Morocco (POWO 2025).

Austrocyllindropuntia subulata

Austrocyllindropuntia subulata is native to the Andes in Peru, possibly Bolivia (Chinnock 2015; Witt & Luke 2017). It has been widely introduced throughout South America where it is used as natural fencing (El Monki et al. 2020).

It has been introduced to: Africa (Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Morocco, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda & Zambia), Asia (Saudi Arabia), Europe (France, Corsica, Greece, Italy, Sardinia, Sicily, Malta, Portugal, Spain, Balearic Islands & Canary Islands), North America (El Salvador & Guatemala), Oceania (Australia & New Zealand) and South America (Argentina & Ecuador) (Al-Robai et al. 2022; Chinnock 2015; Korotkova & Raab-Straube 2017; Pasiecznik 2019b; Witt & Luke 2017).

As *A. subulata* is a popular ornamental species it is likely it is to be present in additional countries (Pasiecznik 2019). The global distribution of *A. subulata* on GBIF can be found in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Global distribution of *Austrocyllindropuntia subulata* from GBIF accessed 18/8/2025.

Austrocyllindropuntia vestita

Austrocyllindropuntia vestita is native to Argentina and Bolivia (LLIFLE - Encyclopedia of living forms 2025; Smith & Figueiredo 2016).

It has been introduced to the Canary Islands, Cape Provinces and Morocco (POWO 2025; Smith & Figueiredo 2016).

Ecology and preferred habitat

Austrocyliandropuntia species inhabit high altitude habits, within the Andes Mountains in South America (Mauseth *et al.* 2002). The species are primarily found in Andean seasonally dry tropical forests, high-elevation grasslands and scrub vegetation (Majure *et al.* 2023).

In its introduced range, the species can be found growing in roadsides, disturbed land, wasteland, drainage ditches, grasslands, savannah, riversides, sandy stream beds and coastal areas including sand dunes and rocky sea cliffs (Novoa *et al.* 2019; Verloove *et al.* 2025; Witt & Luke 2017).

Austrocyliandropuntia cylindrica

Throughout its native range, *A. cylindrica* is found on dry rangelands, along rivers and disturbed areas (Pasiiecznik 2019a). It grows in semi-arid areas with up to 1000mm annual rainfall at altitudes from 500 to 3800 m above sea level (Pasiiecznik 2019a; Christian & Loaiza 2023). In the Andes, the species inhabits montane cloud forest, high montane evergreen forest, humid montane scrub, montane dry scrub, herbaceous páramo and dry páramo (high altitude grassland shrub) (Christian & Loaiza 2023; Sevillano-Ríos *et al.* 2020).

Austrocyliandropuntia exaltata

In its native range, *A. exaltata* grows in savannah and grasslands (Lusweti *et al.* 2011). In its introduced range, it is found in wooded grasslands and disturbed sites (Lusweti *et al.* 2011).

Austrocyliandropuntia floccosa

In its native range, *A. floccosa* typically grows in mountain areas at high elevations, ranging from 3500 m to 4600 m above sea level, on rocky outcrops or grassy slopes (Cáceres & Lowry 2017; Hoxey & Lowry 2021). It grows in the puna grassland ecoregion in the central Andes Mountains (Cáceres & Lowry 2017). The plant grows in areas where annual rainfall is 700 mm a year and temperatures drop below freezing during winter (Hoxey 2016).

Austrocyliandropuntia pachypus

A. pachypus typically inhabits steep slopes in areas of altitudes between 400 m and 2000 m above sea level (Charles 2016). It grows on rocky slopes in shrubby vegetation (LLIFLE- Encyclopedia of living forms 2025).

Austrocyliandropuntia shaferi

In its native range, *A. shaferi* inhabits the prepuna (high-altitude semi-arid) and the puna (high-altitude grassland and shrubland) ecoregions of the Central Andes (López 2003; López *et al.* 2010; Lowry *et al.* 2017).

It grows in very rocky soils with little vegetation at altitudes of 1500 m to 3800 m above sea level (LLIFLE- Encyclopedia of living forms 2025). It is found in valleys on rocky slopes in shrubby vegetation throughout its native range (Ostalaza *et al.* 2017).

Austrocyliandropuntia subulata

In its native range, *A. subulata* is found at elevations of 2000 to 3700m above sea level and grows in inter-Andean valleys and shrubland (Cáceres & Rogue 2020).

In its native range, it grows in semi-arid regions with up to 1000 mm annual rainfall (NSWDPI 2024). It prefers semi-arid and arid rangeland environments. It can be found in free-draining soils with neutral to alkaline pH (NSWDPI 2024). It is tolerant of saline, shallow and infertile soils (NSWDPI 2024).

Austrocyliandropuntia vestita

A. vestita grows in high altitudes of 2400 to 3600 m above sea level on grasslands on rocky soils (LLIFLE - Encyclopedia of living forms 2025; Smith & Figueiredo 2016).

History as a weed overseas

Austrocyliandropuntia species have been widely introduced through the ornamental plant trade and subsequently naturalised (Christian & Loaiza 2023; Sakhraoui *et al.* 2022). There are extensive reports of *A. subulata* and *A. cylindrica* as invasive species overseas. Despite this, there is limited information on the species' impacts throughout its introduced range.

Austrocyliandropuntia cylindrica

Austrocyliandropuntia risk assessment

It has been introduced as an ornamental and naturalised in many parts of Africa, Australia and Europe (Sakhraoui *et al.* 2022). Numerous naturalised populations of *A. cylindrica* have been reported in Algeria, all likely originating as garden escapees (Sakhraoui *et al.* 2022). Some of these populations have contained more than 100 individual plants, had flowers and fruit or were found growing within native flora (Sakhraoui *et al.* 2022). Despite the species preference for higher altitudes, these naturalised Algerian populations have been found at elevations between 12 –104 meters.

The species has naturalised in small populations in Gran Canaria in the Canary Islands where it is described as less aggressive than *A. subulata* (Verloove *et al.* 2018).

Austrocyliodropuntia exaltata

Austrocyliodropuntia exaltata has naturalised in Kenya, Tanzania and Zimbabwe (Hyde 2014). In Zimbabwe the species was planted in rocky areas and escaped (Hyde 2014). It is recorded as naturalised in the Canary Islands, but the extent of naturalisation is uncertain (Korotkova & Raab-Straube 2017).

In East Africa, the potential impacts of *A. exaltata* include invading pastures, lowering value of pasture, preventing the movement of livestock, spines injuring people, wildlife and livestock, spines puncturing tires on vehicles and displacing native species (Lusweti *et al.* 2011).

Austrocyliodropuntia exaltata is a declared category 1 weed in South Africa under the *Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act 43 of 1983*. This means it is prohibited on any land or water surface in South Africa, and it must be controlled or eradicated where possible. The species was listed as it possesses characteristics that are harmful to humans, animals or the environment. In South Africa the species is described as a potential transformer that invades savanna and grassland (Henderson 2001). Its spines and glochids can irritate the skin (Henderson 2001).

Austrocyliodropuntia subulata

A. subulata has a history of naturalising in its introduced range including in parts of Australia, Africa, Asia, Europe and South America.

In Eastern Africa, *Austrocyliodropuntia subulata* was introduced as a hedge barrier and ornamental plant that has since invaded roadsides, disturbed land, wasteland, drainage ditches, grasslands, savannah, riversides and sandy stream beds (Witt & Luke 2017). The species is known to form impenetrable thickets and readily establish from broken segments. The sharp spines can injure people, livestock and wildlife. These dense thickets can prevent access to grazing pastures, water resources, reduce pasture livestock carrying capacities and prevent the movement of wild animals (Witt & Luke 2017).

In Tunisia *A. subulata* has naturalised in coastal areas on clayey slopes (El Monke *et al.* 2020; APD 2019).

In Algeria, *A. subulata* has naturalised and continues to expand its populations (Sakhraoui *et al.* 2022). The populations are reported as flowering and fruiting, but only vegetative reproduction has been observed. It has established in coastal dunes where it is of great concern (Sakhraoui *et al.* 2022). The authors comment on the potential environment and socioeconomic impacts of further proliferation.

In Europe, *Austrocyliodropuntia subulata* is reported as naturalised in Italy, Sardinia, Sicily and the Canary Islands (El Monke *et al.* 2020). It is present in Portugal and Corsica, but it is unknown if it has naturalised. In Italy, it has been recorded invading sand dunes (Novoa *et al.* 2019).

In the Mediterranean islands, *A. subulata* is one of the most widespread invasive species (Celesti-Grapow *et al.* 2016). A study by Celesti-Grapow *et al.* (2016) found that on the Mediterranean islands investigated, *A. subulata* was both the most frequent naturalised species and the species that has expanded the most since the previous study by Pretto *et al.* (2012). The species is recorded as naturalised on 16 Mediterranean islands (Celesti-Grapow *et al.* 2016).

The species has recently been recorded as naturalised in Madeira where it has invaded rocky sea cliffs and poses a threat to native coastal vegetation (Verloove *et al.* 2025).

Austrocyliodropuntia shaveri

This assessment was unable to find any further information on *A. shaveri* in its introduced range.

Austrocyllindropuntia vestita

Austrocyllindropuntia vestita has naturalised in South Africa's Little Karoo, a semi-arid valley in the Western Cape (Smith & Figueiredo 2016). No further information on the species impact in South Africa could be found.

History as a weed in Australia

To date, there have been two *Austrocyllindropuntia* species detected in Queensland, *A. subulata* and *A. cylindrica*. The species may have first been introduced to Australia in the late 1700s with the intent of establishing a cochineal industry (Western Australian Herbarium 2025). In recent history, *Austrocyllindropuntia* species have been introduced through the ornamental plant trade.

***Austrocyllindropuntia subulata* (Eve's pin cactus)**

A. subulata has occasionally naturalised in South Australia (Chinnock 2015). It is known to be in cultivation in Western Australia and New South Wales (Chinnock 2015; NSW DPI 2024).

In South Australia, *Austrocyllindropuntia* spp. are considered invasive as the taxa may persist in abandoned gardens or encroach along fence lines and naturalise into adjoining vegetation (Government of South Australia 2021). The impacts include displacing other species from native vegetation and hinder the movement of humans and animals. The weed has naturalised at some sites throughout South Australia, see Image 8. Despite this, *Austrocyllindropuntia* species are described as slow-growing and have not been reported as causing problems in South Australia (Government of South Australia 2021). There have been no reports of the species producing fruit in South Australia.



Image 8. Infestation of *Austrocyllindropuntia subulata* along a creek near Crystal Brook, South Australia. Photo by Bob Chinnock via NSW DPI.

***Austrocyllindropuntia cylindrica* (cane cactus)**

A. cylindrica is found in Western Australia, South Australia, Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales and Victoria (Chinnock 2015). The species is fairly common in South Australia and Victoria (Chinnock 2015). It is found along roadsides, tracks, in disturbed areas or the margins of shrubland (Chinnock 2015).

In South Australia, infestations of *A. cylindrica* can be found between Murray Bridge and Mannum (Chinnock 2015).

In New South Wales, the impacts of *A. cylindrica* include forming dense thickets that prevent the movement of people and animals and access to recreation areas (NSWDPI 2024). The spines can cause injuries and devalue wool and hides (NSWDPI 2024).

Austrocyllindropuntia risk assessment

An impact assessment conducted by Western Australia found *A. cylindrica* to have high agricultural and environmental impacts (Llyod & Reeves 2014).

Current distribution in Queensland

To date, there are no known *Austrocyllindropuntia* species naturalised in Queensland.

Austrocyllindropuntia subulata has been cultivated illegally in Queensland. The species is popular in the online trade and ~210 specimens have been seized to-date. There are records of *A. subulata* on Atlas of Living Australia, but these reflect compliance detections. The Queensland Herbarium does not list any *Austrocyllindropuntia* species as naturalised in Queensland (Queensland Herbarium 2025).

Current impact in Queensland

There are no current impacts of *Austrocyllindropuntia* species in Queensland. To date, detections have been restricted to cultivated specimens that have subsequently been destroyed.

Uses

Austrocyllindropuntia are fairly popular ornamental plants. Eve's pin cactus (*Austrocyllindropuntia subulata*) is the most common species in the ornamental trade (Pasicznik 2019). This name appears to be used to describe all *Austrocyllindropuntia* species not just *A. subulata* in the ornamental trade.

The genus is planted as a live hedge in America and Africa (Lusweti *et al.* 2011).

It has limited grazing value, due to the spines, but livestock and wild herbivores are reported feeding on *A. exaltata* when nothing else is available (Lusweti *et al.* 2011).

Austrocyllindropuntia species are listed in appendix II of CITES under Cactaceae species (CITES 2023).

Austrocyllindropuntia pachypus is listed as 'Near Threatened' on the *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* and the population is assessed as decreasing. *Austrocyllindropuntia cylindrica* is listed as 'Near Threatened' but its population is assessed as stable on the *IUCN Red List*.

Austrocyllindropuntia subulata, *A. shaferi*, *A. floccosa* are listed as 'Least Concern' and have stable populations on the *IUCN Red List*.

Pest potential in Queensland

The potential impact of *Austrocyllindropuntia* is likely to be similar to other opuntoid cacti.

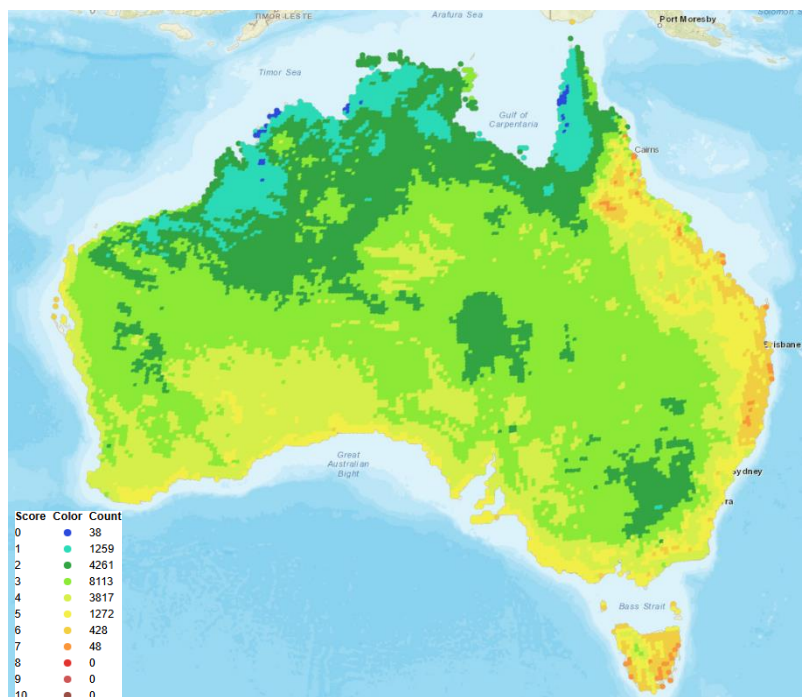
Based on the evidence at-hand, it seems reasonable to conclude that *Austrocyllindropuntia* species pose a high-risk in Queensland. This conclusion is based on the following factors:

- Evidence of escaping cultivation and naturalising outside its native range
- Propensity to form thickets
- Tolerates a range of habitat types
- Closely related to other highly invasive *Opuntia/ Cylindropuntia* spp.
- Spreads vegetatively and by seed
- sharp spines and glochids that can harm people, wildlife and livestock.

The taxa's native range in the Andes is highly specific; however, it has demonstrated a propensity to escape cultivation and naturalise in a range of climates and altitudes, particularly in the Mediterranean and Africa. There is considerable uncertainty, but it appears that semi-arid and arid pastures and native plant communities in southern Queensland are most at-risk.

Potential impacts could replicate historical impacts of closely related *Opuntia* species including, *O. inermis/stricta*, which formed dense stands across millions of hectares of brigalow land, completely replacing native pasture plants and native understorey vegetation. Dense infestations can limit movement of stock, people and vehicles. The spines can injure people, native animals, livestock and *Austrocyllindropuntia* risk assessment

damage types. There is limited information on some of the *Austrocyllindropuntia* species but given the invasive history of closely related congeners, a precautionary approach appears justified.



The dark and light orange indicate areas where climate is most suitable, light orange and yellow indicate areas where climate is marginally suitable. Green, blue and white indicate areas where climate is considered unsuitable for this species.

There is limited distribution-data available on the native range of *Austrocyllindropuntia* species, and this lack of data is likely to impact climate suitability models. In the literature, the taxa's native distribution is described as fragmented and poorly understood, which contributes to the uncertainty of climate models (Ritz *et al.* 2012; ICUN n.d.). A distribution map developed by Ritz *et al.* 2012 of the genus native range was used to develop Map 4, but it was not feasible in this assessment to develop species-specific climate models.

Climate suitability models developed by Duursma *et al.* are available via [Weed Futures](#) for *A. subulata* and *A. cylindrica*.

Numerical Risk Prioritisation Tool

Risk assessment completed using the numerical risk prioritisation tool with the outcomes presented in Table 1.

Impacts	Assessment	Rating	Score
Economic	<p>Significant reduction in regional agricultural output and increased control expenses.</p> <p>Control is a significant addition to existing routine management practices.</p> <p>Major disruption to government land and infrastructure management and/or regional business or industry.</p> <p>Moderate level of harassment to livestock (impacts may occur at times but only result in moderate injuries).</p>	Major	4
Social amenity	<p>Potential to move into degraded areas in and around townships/communities including into riparian areas, bushland and gardens.</p>	Moderate	3

	May affect access, appearance, or increase management requirements. May reduce recruitment of native species.		
Human health	Occasionally causing physical injuries (due to spines or barbs).	Moderate	3
Environment	Potential to invade disturbed systems and impact on ecosystems that may be already degraded.	Moderate	3
		Total	4
Invasiveness	Mainly establish when there has been moderate disturbance to existing vegetation, which substantially reduces competition (e.g. intensive grazing, mowing, raking, clearing of trees, temporary floods or summer droughts). May spread by vegetative means including fragments, runners or bulbs. Are commonly dispersed by people (e.g. fodder contaminant, hitchhiker, garden plant).	High	3
Potential distribution	Insufficient data	-	2
Risk	Risk=Impact x Invasiveness x Potential distribution	Very High	24

Table 1 Risk assessment of *Austrocyllindropuntia* species.

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Appendix

Detailed taxonomy of *Austrocyllindropuntia* species.

Species: *Austrocyllindropuntia cylindrica* (Lam.) Backeb.

Common names: cane cactus

Synonyms:

Austrocyllindropuntia risk assessment

- *Austrocyllindropuntia intermedia* Rauh & Backeb.
- *Cactus coranarius* Cav.
- *Cactus cylindricus* Lam.
- *Cylindropuntia cylindrica* (Lam.) F.M.Knuth
- *Cylindropuntia intermedia* (Rauh & Backeb.) Rauh & Backeb.
- *Opuntia bradleyi* G.D.Rowley
- *Opuntia cylindrica* (Lam.) DC.

Species: *Austrocyllindropuntia exaltata* (A.Berger) Backeb.

Synonyms:

- *Austrocyllindropuntia subulata* subsp. *exaltata* (A.Berger) D.R.Hunt
- *Cylindropuntia exaltata* (A.Berger) Backeb.
- *Opuntia exaltata* A.Berger
- *Opuntia subulata* var. *exaltata* (A.Berger) G.D.Rowley

Species: *Austrocyllindropuntia floccosa* (Salm-Dyck) F.Ritter

Common names: waraqu

Synonyms:

- *Andinopuntia floccosa* (Salm-Dyck) Guiggi
- *Austrocyllindropuntia lauliacoana* F.Ritter
- *Opuntia floccosa* Salm-Dyck
- *Tephrocactus floccosus* (Salm-Dyck) Backeb.

Species: *Austrocyllindropuntia pachypus* (K.Schum.) Backeb.

Synonyms:

- *Cylindropuntia pachypus* (K.Schum.) Backeb.
- *Opuntia pachypus* K.Schum.
- *Peruviopuntia pachypus* (K.Schum.) Guiggi

Species: *Austrocyllindropuntia shaferi* (Britton & Rose) Backeb.

Subspecies:

- *Austrocyllindropuntia shaferi* var. *humahuacana* (Backeb.) R.Kiesling
- *Austrocyllindropuntia shaferi* var. *shaferi* (Britton & Rose) F.Ritter

Synonyms:

- *Austrocyllindropuntia steiniana* Backeb.
- *Austrocyllindropuntia weingartiana* (Backeb.) Backeb.
- *Cylindropuntia shaferi* (Britton & Rose) Backeb.
- *Cylindropuntia weingartiana* (Backeb.) Backeb.
- *Opuntia ignescens* var. *steiniana* (Backeb.) G.D.Rowley
- *Opuntia shaferi* Britton & Rose
- *Opuntia steiniana* (Backeb.) G.D.Rowley
- *Opuntia weingartiana* Backeb.

- *Trichopuntia shaferi* (Britton & Rose) Guiggi

Species: *Austrocyllindropuntia subulata* (Muehlenpf.) Backeb.

Common names:

- Eve's pin cactus
- Eve's needle cactus

Synonyms:

- *Cylindropuntia subulata* (Muehlenpf.) F.M.Knuth
- *Opuntia subulata* (Muehlenpf.) Engelm.
- *Pereskia subulata* Muehlenpf.
- *Pereskopsis subulata* (Muehlenpf.) Britton & Rose

Species: *Austrocyllindropuntia vestita* (Salm-Dyck) Backeb.

Common names:

- Old man opuntia
- Cotton pole
- Cotton coral cactus

Synonyms:

- *Cylindropuntia vestita* (Salm-Dyck) Backeb.
- *Opuntia vestita* Salm-Dyck
- *Pseudotephrocactus vestitus* (Salm-Dyck) Frič & Schelle
- *Trichopuntia vestita* (Salm-Dyck) Guiggi