**BRINGING IN THE BIG GUNS**

**Using Mechanical Methods to Tackle Pines Gone Wild**

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Hunter Water Corporation (Hunter Water) manages buffer lands surrounding Grahamstown Dam north of Raymond Terrace. The area provides habitat for threatened biodiversity including a large population of the threatened plant *Callistemon linearifolius* as well as habitat for endangered Koalas. In 2019, it was estimated that in excess of 50 ha of buffer land at the southwestern end of the dam had become heavily infested with Radiata Pine (*Pinus radiata*), with the weed forming monospecific stands in some areas.

Radiata Pine poses a significant threat to the populations of *Callistemon linearifolius* and Koala, and biodiversity values in general, by reducing wildlife corridor functionality, suppressing native species regeneration, reducing structural habitat diversity and limiting native species diversity. Pine infestations around the dam also present a bushfire risk, which in turn presents a risk to water quality within the dam.

In 2020, Hunter Water commenced large scale works to remove the majority of the pine infestation. Various options for eliminating the pines were considered, with the adopted methodology involving the use of heavy machinery to mulch high density areas of pine, and manual felling in lower density areas containing native vegetation.

Although natural regeneration is progressing well in most areas, continual suppression of pines will be ongoing for years to come. Hunter Water has secured an Environmental Trust grant to assist with this enormous task, with secondary weed treatment, targeted planting and ecological burns, planned to occur over the next four years.