

Fears Asian bee is Australia's next cane toad

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A bee (C) lands to collect pollen on the flower of a Cereus or Hedge Cactus in the coastal suburb of Cottesloe in Western Australia in 2008. The aggressive and invasive Asian honey bee could become as bad a pest in Australia as the cane toad, a senator warned Wednesday, adding that the insect could threaten the country's food supply.

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The [cane toad](#), a prolific breeder which secretes a toxin that can kill pets and wildlife, has spread widely in tropical Australia since being introduced to kill [beetles](#) in the 1930s, devouring insects, bird's eggs and native species such as the quoll, a cat-like marsupial.

Greens Senator Christine Milne said the bee industry was at risk from an

incursion of *Apis cerana* in the northeastern city of Cairns which was first detected in 2007.

"It is the 21st century equivalent of the cane toad and the bee keepers have been saying that for some time," Milne told reporters, describing the pest as "a cane toad with wings".

The Australian bee industry has urged the eradication of the Asian species, which undermines European [honey bee](#) populations by competing for food, robbing hives and transmitting disease and parasites.

The industry fears that if the Asian bee becomes established it will destroy European honey bee populations, which are kept in hives and transported around the country to pollinate crops.

Because the Asian bee cannot be kept in boxes, it is not suitable for such [pollination](#) techniques.

But government officials are likely to abandon an attempt to wipe out the Asian species at the end of April after saying it was "no longer technically feasible to achieve eradication".

Sustainability Minister Tony Burke said the decision by the Asian honey bee management group was based on scientific research.

"But (it) does not amount to a decision that there will not be continued engagement in other areas other than eradication in terms of control," he told parliament.

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