Speaker 1: (Singing).

Catriona R.: Northern Australia has an absolutely massive coastline. We're talking over 10,000 kilometres of sparsely populated land. This is seriously beautiful country, but it's also where our country is especially vulnerable to the introduction of exotic pests, weeds, and diseases.

Top Watch supports a system of early detection that is essential to all of Australia. So if we want the north to be a safe barrier, it is so important that we absolutely cannot allow pests and diseases to come into this area. What we don't want is for it to be a sort of springboard for them to come in and gain a toehold, because once those pests and diseases make their way into the more populated food-producing regions of Australia, it can all be too late.

Yachts and fishing vessels making their way to mainland Australia from the islands to the north. Well, often they can come in with no biosecurity clearance at all. Some don't even know what biosecurity regulations even are. You can imagine, in their galleys or their kitchens where they keep things like fresh meat, fruit, and veggies, these are biosecurity risks. These can be the carriers of the pests and disease.

Vivien: What are on board vessels could pose a risk to Australia. Mosquitoes laying their eggs in containers could hatch out larvae that could carry diseases such as Zika and dengue fever. The vessel itself could also pose a risk. It could house exotic wood borers or termites.

These are not the only risks of vessels. Vessels could also carry fresh meat, vegetables, or fruit products. These old may be potential risks to Australia.

Catriona R.: The consequences of dealing with something that wasn't detected or reported straight away can be devastating, so NAQS works hand in hand with state and territory government agencies as well as rural producers. So it's probably a pretty good time to ask you, do you know what your state and territory biosecurity obligations are?

It's not only towns, farms, and communities at risk. Open country, bushland, is equally at risk.

Madusha: Another disease that Australia is currently free from is rabies, which is present in most other countries around the world and as close as 600 kilometres away from Australia on Indonesian islands. The rabies virus spreads primarily through dogs when they bite another mammal. Signs of rabies in dogs include aggressive behaviour, frothing at the mouth, restlessness, or even unusual shyness in an otherwise active animal. Rabies can spread rapidly in the right circumstances, which is why we need to remain attentive for dogs displaying unusual behaviour.

Northern Australia is faced with some unique risks of diseases being introduced due to its close proximity with neighbouring countries, where certain diseases currently exotic to Australia may exist within their animal populations.

However, the concentrated amount of surveillance activities are conducted by our biosecurity officers and vets around the coastal regions of the Northern territory, the Torres Strait islands and the Northern peninsula area to ensure that these risks are managed.

Catriona R.: It's important that we all work together to keep a top watch on what is entering into Australia. Exotic pests and diseases can put into jeopardy industries like tourism and agriculture. The banana farmer, the mango farmers, citrus, and the effects, well, that not only lasts for years for us, but also for our markets overseas. We really do have to be careful. It is serious.

Biosecurity is all about looking towards our future, protecting Australia. Biosecurity really is everyone's business.

Speaker 1: (singing).