# National Biosecurity Forum

Day 3 Session 3

11 November 2020

## Introduction

This is the transcript the National Biosecurity Forum, presented by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.

## Transcript

[Webinar begins]

Nick Housego: Hello, and welcome to this the National Biosecurity Forum. My name is Nick Housego. I will be facilitating this session. And I want to welcome those who are new to the sessions and new to the forum. A jolly big welcome, thank you for attending. And for those who have been staying with us throughout the course, again, welcome. And I think I'll start this session off with an acknowledgement of country. We're in the Ngunnawal country here, but we're spread right across Australia and New Zealand. So I thought it'd be good to begin by acknowledging our traditional custodians on the land on which we're meeting, which is the Ngunnawal peoples, and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging. I'd also like to welcome any Indigenous Torres Strait Islander, Aboriginal people who are on today's meeting, you're most welcome. Thank you. So let's get ourselves underway.

Nick Housego: The first session, we're going to hear a range of speakers about Indigenous Environmental Biosecurity today. Sue Sargent, you're just for finding out now that you're going to be the first to step off the mark this afternoon. You're from the Fraser Island Natural Integrity Alliance, along with Tilly Davis from the Butchulla Lands and Sea Rangers who will then be joining us to speak about their work with the community to protect the K'Gari which is Fraser Island.

Sue Sargent: Just to get started and hopefully, Tilly will be able to join me at some point or another. What I'll do is I'll try and cover as much as I can and Tilly's slides are interspersed with mine, but hopefully I can cover some of hers as well until she's able to join us. So, just telling you a little bit more about who I am and who Tilly is. My name is Sue Sargent and I work... I'm currently the Chair of the Fraser Island Natural Integrity Alliance, or FINIA, which is Non-Incorporated umbrella group for stakeholders and partners, all working together to protect the natural integrity of Fraser Island or K'Gari. And Tilly Davis or Matilda Davis is the Biosecurity Officer for the Butchella Land and Sea Rangers who operate under the Butchella Aboriginal Corporation and act on behalf of the native title holders for K'Gari.

Sue Sargent: And before I get started, I'd like to acknowledge the elders, past, present, and the leaders emerging of the Taribeland Bunda people who which is where I'm meeting today on their country and the Butchulla people of K'Gari Fraser Island, which is where Tilly will be calling in from as well. So, this one is Tilly's slide but unfortunately, she's not been able to join in with us yet. So, basically Butchulla country and Butchulla lore. So, basically this there are three lores that the Butchulla operate under, the first one is What is good for the land comes first. The second one is Do not touch or take what does not belong to you. And the third one is If you have plenty you must share. First what is particularly pertinent obviously to land management, that basically what is good for the country must come first. So where is Butchulla country? So Butchulla country actually stretches all the way across K'Gari which is Fraser Island in here in Queensland, and the adjacent mainland around Double Island Point in the south, which is down here all the way up to Burrum Heads in the north and Inland to the west here at Bauple Mountain.

Sue Sargent: And the Butchulla people would also have travelled across other adjacent trip lands up into the Bunya Mountains and up north here into the Goreng Goreng people and south of the Kabi Kabi Lands. So in terms of biosecurity, and I'd looked up when was biosecurity first sort of termed as a word. And it appears to have sort of first appeared in literature around about 1973 and is defined as being meaning security from exposure to harmful biological agents and taken to ensure this is security. So in terms of how does traditional knowledge actually interspersed with biosecurity, you could argue that Australia didn't really have any major biosecurity risks until we arrived, and maybe that this was some first attempts to actually ward off biosecurity risks to Australia. But ultimately, I think that since white people have arrived, we've obviously greatly spread diseases, pests and other problems since then.

Sue Sargent: So the other aspect of here in terms of why engaging with indigenous communities? Well, in 2010... Sorry 2007 under Article 10 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people, free prior informed consent came in, which ultimately defines that it is a responsibility on all of us, it's incumbent to make sure that anything that we are doing is actually with the permission, and the consent of the indigenous people that are responsible for a particular land or property. And that was supported fully in Australia in 2009. But engagement is actually really the first step, and I'll be talking a little bit more about what happens beyond engagement in our particular case study.

Sue Sargent: So the next one... Again, this one was going to be a slide for Tilly, so apologies if I gloss a little. But ultimately, using the term cultural significance is really, really challenging. Because unlike our system, where we might sort of say, well, a plant is significant, because it's rare or it's endangered, it might have a use for agriculture, it may have a use in terms of... It may be particularly important for biodiversity values, or maybe an important part of a food chain. In much the same way, the cultural system actually has a whole series of different values that apply to natural resources, and that means the plants, the animals, and also the landscapes that make up cultural lands. So these might range from everything from being a Totem, Totem species were really important. If you had a totem species, it was your responsibility to make sure it was used in a way that wasn't sustainable. That means it shouldn't be over hunted.

Sue Sargent: And ultimately, somebody may have to ask your permission, for example, if they can actually use or take your Totem species. Other things we use for traditional medicines, in stories, song, art, cultural practises, cultural use. I mean, that may have been things like species that were particularly useful for making fire, for example, or for weaving baskets, and things like that. And of course, the all important food sources. In the case of the Butchulla, a lot of the food sources were actually seafood, and obviously the plants and other foods that they then place with that seafood. But it's not that simple, because ultimately, if you take in to the account the creation story of K'Gari, which popularly is said to me in paradise, but is actually a story of a princess, who was a spirit person who was actually left as the island after she fell in love with it and decided she didn't want to leave.

Sue Sargent: And you then overlay the Butchulla lores and cultural protocols that require you to go to elders, and get permission to use certain information, and who that information can be shared with. It becomes a lot more complicated. And ultimately, as this lovely quote here from Aunty Joyce Bonner says, "You can't actually separate the different parts of K'Gari, the island, her sand, waters, lakes, plants, and animals. It's a whole if one part of her is sick, the whole island is sick and her people, we are sick too." And this whole aspect of the need to heal K'Gari is actually really intrinsic to that first lore of what's good for the country must come first.

Sue Sargent: I'll carry on. So in terms of how do you actually look at that knowledge? Well, put simply, it's much like our own system of knowledge, in the same way that you wouldn't try and teach a primary school child about the full photosynthetic biochemical process, the information is layered. And ultimately, as a person grew or gained knowledge, they will be allowed to have more information or more knowledge that was appropriate to them and their needs. So particular knowledge, some of it say, for example, for medicines or other knowledge was held within particular clan groups, or family groups always held at a certain level and wouldn't have been shared wider. And so in the same way, that it's not a simple thing of just saying, "Well give us your list of species that are important from a biosecurity perspective." The problem is that if you did that, that would be completely culturally inappropriate and it could be perceived as giving up knowledge, which is as we'd say, would be the intellectual property of a traditional owner group.

Sue Sargent: So in terms of the value of engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. As I said before, it's not just about engagement, it's so much more than that. It's actually about sharing new levels of information about country and linkages between the plants, animals and seasons that you can really only learn through thousands of years of observation. It's about genuinely working together to monitor and protect country. And it's about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders being able to practise their culture and responsibilities for country. So I'll carry on with the presentation. But this is actually one of Tilly's slides.

Sue Sargent: So ultimately, Tilly was going to talk a little bit about the projects that the Butchulla Land and Sea Rangers have been working on, which is a Myrtle rust Project. And this is a Myrtle rust project. So ultimately, this is the Butchulla Land and Sea Rangers out in the field with Dr. Geoff Pegg and Dr. Louise Shuey. And this was actually about establishing the plots that have been established in the southern part of Gari or Fraser Island, which were post fire from the last season. So in terms of the particular entity that we're focusing on, Gari with Myrtle rust, we've got a large number of species that have been already identified as being affected by Myrtle rust. We are seeing a little bit of early resistance in a couple of species. But the surveys that The Butchella Land and Sea Rangers conducted a couple of weeks ago, identified that about 75% of the epicormic growth on the plants postfire had actually been Myrtle-rust affected. And you can see sort of as it affects the new growing tips in particular, this was particularly a problem. So in terms of what has this project meant for Gari, and one of the things... As I said before, this is actually about adding and this is also been a very highly collaborative project.

Sue Sargent: So FINIA and its partners work closely with the Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation and the Butchulla Land and Sea Rangers. And this has led to some great initiatives from joint fieldwork and management activities on the island with Fraser Island Defenders Organisation, to the capacity building, with Dr. Geoff Pegg and Louise Shuey, from Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, and even research with the University of Melbourne to minimise future biosecurity risks to Gari. And that one's been done in conjunction with the support of the Chief Environmental Biosecurity office as well. So ultimately, if you aren't working with your traditional owners, then you are severely missing out. So my final slide which maybe Tilly will get a chance to go back to is to say thank you or 'Galangoor nyin' in Butchulla language. Ultimately, we can't do any of this stuff on our own. And this is just a small list of the people that have supported our activities on Gari together. Thank you.

Nick Housego: So now I've got to look at the Māori's perspective. And we're going to have approaches to biosecurity. Melanie, are you right to take on the microphone?

Melanie: (Acknowledgement of country in Māori) . So I acknowledge obviously your country your earth, your peoples, the keepers of your manner, your lanes, but also our Pacifica Indigenous brothers and sisters, and the organisers of this conference. (Speaking in Māori langauge) To translate, on my father's side I am off from a great number of Māori tribes from the North Island. And on my mother's side I am of Gunn, Mackintosh, English and Viking ancestry. My name is Melanie. And as you said in the beginning, I have many roles or many heads including the CEO of Te Tira Whakamātaki, which is a National Māori Environmental not for profit. But I'm also the Kaihautu, or the Māori Director of (Speaking in Māori language) which is the Maori way of saying New Zealand's Biological Heritage National Science Challenge. And I'm also the Chief Māori Advisor or Kaihautu of the Ministry for the Environment. So I wear many, many hats, and many spaces from research, to environmental activism, through policy and government representation, all of which can be very confusing, depending on which day you've got me. And I'm hoping that I can share these slides and and I can go through this talk really fast.

Melanie: I want to acknowledge first of all, the presenters before me, and the great work that they're doing in the Myrtle rust space, I saw a picture of Corey, one of your kaitiaki, or one of your protectors in the Myrtle rust of Fraser Island space. And I think I've got a photo later on in my slides, of Corey as well, because we work alongside him as well. I've also got a lot of information and slides. And so I will share these slides with the organisers and feel free to ask for them, to have a look at them, and to read the comments. I tend to dump a lot of stuff in comments for people to read. So I'm happy to share all that because I do talk really fast on purpose because I know I've got time limits. And there's lots and lots of contextual stuff that I want to talk about that kind of helps understand what the Maori perspectives and approaches to biosecurity are.

Melanie: And if you can see that screen, it's got a list of things like contextualising Maori perspective. And really, to understand a Maori perspective and an approach to biosecurity, you have to understand the history, you have to understand what we've been through, and why we behave the way we do, why we have the views we do and why we push in certain areas. And this is a list kind of the things that I think make up the Maori perspective and approach to biosecurity. And so I'm going to touch on these really, really fast and then get to the exciting stuff, which is what we do. So the first slide is about contextualising our perspectives and approaches. And hopefully, this video will play and you can wave frantically if it doesn't. I'll try and take it back to the beginning. And again, like I said, you'll have the slides later. But basically this video that might not play kind of shows Maori, the voyaging to New Zealand.

Melanie: And what I want to display with this is that Maori perspective of biosecurity is embedded in the belly of who we are like our Aboriginal brothers across New Orleans, Polynesian ancestors of the Maori people came to Aotearoa by Waka about a 1000... 1300 AD. They were predominantly hunters, fisherman, gardeners, explorers, which also means that there were navigator scientists who migrated across vast seas. And subsequently, when they arrived in Altiero, New Zealand, they had to acquire in depth knowledge of the new environment and develop effective conservation practises to manage, like many indigenous peoples. And it is then reasonable to assume that Maori were not only navigators and explorers but also innovators, botanists, ecologists, sociologists, who through observation, trial, and error had to learn to live in harmony with a new environment.

Melanie: All of this really important because like their presenters before, the Maori view of the world, is very much connected to land. The land, the rivers, the mountains of each person's tribal area are the first thing we mentioned like I did when I introduced myself those things make me who I am. The Maori view of the world is that we are 'Tangata whenua', people of the land without the whenua part, we cease to exist, we are just tangata. And we can't be tangata whenua anywhere else, but in these lands. It's why our lands and our environments are so important to us.

Melanie: But more than just being important to us, they are part of our responsibilities of being here on this earth. They are what drives us as kaitiaki or guardians of these lands. Preserving the mode or the life force of lands and our resources like Pounamu is vitally important to who we are, it is our expression of kaitiakitanga, which is the guardianship of a resource for future generations. And that is part of who we are. It's part of our tikanga, our customer values and practises. It is embedded in legislation the word kaitiaki tanga as you can see on the screen with a flashing video going around and around. And it is something that was developed over time, pre-colonisation. And hopefully if I can flick to the next screen and it works for you, what we saw is that post colonisation, Maori went through like many indigenous people, a process of land loss, resistance, and loss of culture. But that loss of culture is really important in the biosecurity conversation because it's that intimate connection between land that was destroyed through a process of colonisation.

Melanie: Maori had a thriving economy pre-colonisation, and just after colonisation, and that thriving economy was impacted, obviously, through colonisation and land loss. And then through legislation, as you can see here, that was designed to purposely strip Maori of their culture and their practises, their language, the environmental practises, importantly, and deny Maori participation in governance and decision making around their lands and their waterways. On top of that, we have processes especially in the science space, that are designed to not only take indigenous knowledge, and to use it for commercial benefit, but also prevent Maori indigenous peoples using it. And WAI 262 is a tribunal claim in New Zealand, which is about the loss of control over heritage. And it has a strong component on it, which is about the loss of control of flora and fauna. And the access to that.

Melanie: When we see big companies overseas, adopting indigenous cultures for, their own purpose and benefit and excluding those indigenous communities for making decisions about it. That's important because our Treaty settlements are based on that loss, and that denial of access to decision making, and our Treaty settlements are slow process here in New Zealand. They are processes that is surrounded with controversy and misinformation. People think Treaty settlements are as big as that blue bubble, Treaty settlements are actually the little red bubble, they pale in significance to government bailouts. In fact, our Treaty settlement value in one year, in 2018, was just $20 million was paid out. The text take from Maori in the consumption of tobacco, alcohol, and gambling was $1.1 billion in that same year. So you can see that our Treaty Settlements, a small fraction of what last week's variance, plus the taxes that we pay a citizen of this country as well. That settlement does relate to security, I'll get there, is really important because that settlement process, which has pumped about $2 billion into the Maori economy, has created a renaissance and a resurgence of Maori investment.

Melanie: And that Maori investment is predominantly in land based industries, as you probably heard from my other Kiwi colleague working for the ministry. Maori are over invested and I say over invested in things like sheep, beef, lamb, kiwi fruit, dairy, all things that can be impacted and wiped out by one biosecurity incursion. Our future wealth is invested in things that are dependent on a strong biosecurity system, and a biosecurity system that isn't underpinned by our knowledge, by our matauranga. That knowledge that we've acquired over thousands of years of intimacy with this land, and it's a system that excludes us. It's a system that actively excludes Maori participation. This is the New Zealand Biosecurity System. And it now, we're on that system along that pipeline, is there an expectation that Mario will be consulted, engaged with, considered given access to resourcing, or power. And so our whole economy is built on a system, is built on investments that this system is designed to protect, and this system doesn't provide any space for the indigenous communities.

Melanie: So the Maori view of biosecurity is that it's exclusive, and it completely excludes us from decision making. And that is something that we are trying to change in my organisation into Tira Whakamataki, the Maori environmental not for profit. We do it just like Sue Saergent by trying to engage with their communities. That's the first step in meeting our undrip requirements, engage, have conversations. Equally, we do it by showing indigenous solutions. We talk about environmental management practises that are traditional to us, easy ones like 'rahui' which is simply a closure of a site. And we talk about how that's important to us, what that means, why our ancestors did that? What is the cultural significance of land closure and how does it relate to a modern practise of link closure. Unfortunately, though, and New Zealand, probably like Australia, many of our solutions are ignored. They're ignored because of ignorance, because of arrogance, because of fear, all sorts of reasons. And again, part of our job is to raise awareness, surround our practises, and to seek behaviour change not only in the system, but in our communities to adopt and accept some of our practises, and or at least to understand why we advocate for them.

Melanie: And so our job is to raise awareness to create impact and ultimately to change systems so that Maori can influence the biosecurity system. Why do we do that? We do that because at the heart of everything that we do is our communities and our community's ability to self determine, to have access to information, advice and training to make decisions for themselves for the future generations, and for the lands. Ultimately, what we aim to do is protect what's of value to us. And that's our land and our waterways. We do that with people from all over the world, including from your country, and you'll see Corey in that picture as well. But we do it predominantly here with our elders, our Tohunga, our old knowledge holders, many of whom who have held on to in secrecy, the knowledge practises. Because when I showed that list of legislation designed to oppress, many of those pieces of act were designed to rip traditional knowledge out of Maori communities and to stop us practising our environmental practises or our traditional medicines.

Melanie: So we work with all sorts of people from the grassroots through to academia, through to politics, and politicians, and policymakers. And we focus largely on research. And so like I said, I will share these slides. We do projects like Myrtle rust projects like Sue and Tilly are doing. We focus on things that connect traditional knowledge like this one, which is connecting the relationship between the tohora, the whale and the Kauri tree, and finding a solution in that connection. But we also connect that to science, to Western science, which is understanding the microbiome of the whale, and how that might support kauri dieback or might eliminate kauri dieback. We look at science practises and microbiology around white rot fungi, And then we couple that with traditional practises. We look at things like soundscapes, how does our language tell us about solutions for forest health? Does it give us clues and hints to what our forests look like pre-human inhabitants.

Melanie: We create movies, this is a good one to look at on YouTube. We create movies that tell the stories of our elders, and what they're doing to protect their forests. And then we work with their like really brainy scientists, the hardcore scientists to give them access, where appropriate, knowledge about specific plants that we use for medicine, which we think will have solutions for biosecurity inclusions. And we do that-

Melanie: ...because ultimately, we're trying to find indigenous solutions for a better world. So Tena koutu... Thank you for having me, and for the time, and sorry, I talked so fast, but I will share the slides.

Nick Housego: I can't believe you got so much material out. That was a lot of material there that you shared. Thank you very, very much. Just a quick one, Tilly has provided notes in the comments for all attendees to have a read off. So please take a bit of time to have a look at the comments if you could as we go through. This next session is... We've got integrated biosecurity, the science and the Rangers. This is both Darren Peck and Desley Darby from our Cairns office. And they look after that entire northern area of Australia from Broome back across to Cairns, it's a rather large playing field for these guys to operate in. And they do it brilliantly. Over to you, Darren, and over to you Desley.

Darren Peck: All right, Nick, I'd like to just firstly acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples as the first inhabitants of the country that we're meeting on today. And pay my respects to the traditional custodians and elders, past and present on the land on which we stand today. So we'll jump into it. So thanks again for the opportunity to present today. It's always a pleasure for us in Northern Australia to present on biosecurity and in particular, on the work that we're doing with the Indigenous Ranger Network up here in the North. So I'll basically give you a bit of an overview of biosecurity in the North and some of our thinking around the Ranger programme in particular, and then I'll hand it over to Desley who'll go through some of the details around the programme in particular and some of the other initiatives that we're trying to progress.

Darren Peck: So just flick through to the next slide. So as I said, I wanted to give you a bit of an overview of the biosecurity settings in Northern Australia. So NAQS or the Northern Australian Quarantine Strategy, which is the entity that we all work for or with, was originally set up as a trial programme off of a review back in 1987. So we've been going strong for over 30 years, and really it was set up as a as an early detection, surveillance programme for pests and diseases, weeds, those sorts of things. They can enter the country via what's known as unregulated biosecurity risk pathways. Now I think everybody probably knows in this forum, what a regulated biosecurity pathway is. So they're conveyances, people, goods, things like that, that can come through into the country via our major ports, so containerized cargo, cut flowers, things like that. And they regulated because we have instruments in place to be able to manage biosecurity risks that can hitchhike or exist on those pathways. So these are things like inspectors, further sanitary conditions, import regulations, all those sorts of things. So it's a highly regulated environment.

Darren Peck: But what we deal with up in Northern Australia is quite different. We are very close to the Papua New Guinea landmass, and also Indonesia. And more importantly, we have seasonal weather patterns that actually can bring risk material into the north of Australia through those sort of weather patterns. We've also got sort of ocean currents that are moving through the Indonesian archipelago, and can also bring risk into the north of Australia via that method. But a good example of both the risk pathway and the risk itself is this image here was taken earlier this year. And it just shows the weather patterns that come down, as I said, seasonally each year, and they sweep through the Indonesian archipelago through Papua New Guinea landmass, and into Northern Australia. And the result of that is in the Torres Strait, we have exotic fruit flies turning up in our traps up there every single year. And we've got a long running, trapping, and eradication programme up in the Torres Strait there that we've been working with the Queensland Government on for a long period of time, over 20 years. And it's been very successful, we trap the exotic fruit flies, we then go out block bait for them and eradicate them every year.

Darren Peck: And they brought in on those unregulated risk pathways, as I've just articulated. So that's a good example of actually what's happening in Northern Australia. Another really important thing, or contextual piece of information that you must know about Northern Australia is, as I alluded to, how close Torres Strait is to Papua New Guinea. So this is a picture taken from Saba Island. And it's only three and a half kilometres away from Papa New Guinea landmass. And you can see that in the distance there. So you've got Saba in the foreground, and you've got Papua New Guinea landmass. Now, as you're probably aware, there's a lot of pests and diseases in Papua New Guinea, including the fruit flies that I just spoke about. But a lot of emerging things, African swine fever, you probably heard about, fall armyworm was something also that's quite topical and came through that pathway earlier this year, and a number of other pests and diseases that are on our high priority target list.

Darren Peck: Over the years, we've worked collaboratively with a range of research organisations and entities, universities, for example, as well. And they've been able to help us really narrow down where the key risk areas are in terms of a biosecurity risk material entering and establishing are in Northern Australia. Obviously, the Torres Strait and the Northern Peninsula area, that sort of tip of Queensland there is high risk. But there's also other areas there as well. You've got peri-urban Darwin, and around Darwin, East into Arnhem Land, and also the Old River irrigation area in Western Australia. They're high risk zones where we really know that's where we have to focus our efforts in terms of surveillance for pests and diseases. So that over the years, we've really been able to hone in where we should deploy our resources. Now, this is where the Ranger programme and the network that we've developed with the Rangers come in, they operate in across the north of Australia. I understand the country obviously very well, I know what shouldn't shouldn't be there. So for a long period of time now, we've been engaging with Ranger groups, and they've been very responsive to our engagement and we've got them working collaboratively with us on a suite of different activities.

Darren Peck: And there's just some examples of some of the work that they're doing there. Everything from signal heard, bleeding, white trapping for midges, sampling for Avian Influenza, they do a lot of plant host mapping for us as well which helps us target our surveillance activities to particular hosts. Coastal surveillance, aquatic biosecurity is something that's becoming very important as well. And we've had some great wins with Ranger groups, detecting some exotic mussels across the north of Australia. Green-lipped mussel, for example, was detected on only on few islands, all down to... And these things wouldn't have been detected without the assistance of the Rangers, so it's been, in my view, a very successful programme. But we've still got a lot to do. It's a long term investment that we're making. And we're continuing to develop capability, and Desley will go over some of the details.

Darren Peck: The last slide for me, though, is really just to show you how we've developed some kind of framework or an approach, a strategic approach to how we invest in the group. So what we've done, the little circles there, this was meant to be an animated slide, Nick, but unfortunately, we haven't been able to get it working. But the little circles, there are a range of groups, we've been able to look at the capabilities that the Ranger groups need to be able to do the work that we want them to do. And then we've overlaid those risk areas as high risk areas that we've found that I alluded to, in the beginning of the presentation, two slides ago, and said... All right, well, this is where we need to invest, these groups are in high risk zones, these are the activities we needed to do. And we've been able to engage and hone and develop out and invest I guess in terms of their training and their capability, specifically in a more targeted way. So really, I guess I'll probably in the interest of time, I'm on hand over to Desley. But I hope that gave you a flavour of I guess what we're trying to achieve . Over to you, Desley.

Desley Darby: Hi, everyone, I'm Desley Darby. Hopefully you can tell the difference between me and Darren, often we get mixed up. Look, I look after the Indigenous Ranger Biosecurity programme on behalf of the Department. And I guess there's a couple of key messages that I really wanted you to leave with today. Darren has given you the logic behind the Indigenous Ranger Biosecurity Programme. And again, if nothing else from our presentation today, and again, I apologise for our presentation, it always works well when no one else is looking. But as soon as people are on online, it changes. The three things I'd really like you to take home with you is that science underpins the Indigenous Ranger Biosecurity Programme. It is real work delivering real outcomes for the benefit of not only indigenous communities, but Australia and our producers and our communities. It's a continuous improvement programme. We continually look to as to how we're going to improve what we do. It is not a static environment. And you'll see there's a couple of different reasons for that as we go through.

Desley Darby: And the third thing, and this is the vision that we hold in the programme, is that we are delivering enhanced biosecurity. And what we would like to see with that enhanced biosecurity is primarily in the future that enhanced biosecurity is going to be delivered by indigenous Ranger groups. That is the end game for us. It's about reducing the government officers going out and conducting biosecurity in Northern Australia and supplementing that with very capable highly trained indigenous Rangers who for the benefits that Darren said before, know their land, not know what's right, what should be there and what shouldn't be there. So I guess how are we going to do that? And in front of you there we have the programme logic for the Ranger programme. This is over three years, we've got a very ambitious programme, but I believe we will place to deliver it. So how are we going to do it? There's a combination of a couple of things. Firstly, we're going to maintain our fee-for-service arrangements. So what we do in that space is as Darren said, if the scientists identify a particular risk pathway and in Northern Australia and with those regulated pathways that you picked up from Darren, we can't mitigate those risks unless somebody can can learn to stop the tide, to stop the wind, that sort of stuff, those unregulated pathways will always present a biosecurity risk.

Desley Darby: So for us, we would like to continue our fee-for-service arrangements with indigenous Rangers in particular areas that represent a biosecurity risk pathway. And like everything in life, those pathways change from time to time, whether it be due to climate change, or whether it be due to something happening with one of our northern neighbours. So it's important that we keep delivering those fee-for-service arrangements where the science says that we need to be looking. And we always say, again, in the programme, that there's a big difference between not looking and not finding, and looking and not finding. Sometimes there's a little bit of a confusion, we would like to think that, we have lots of Rangers flying around the place rescuing a small dog that from a rabies, ridden another dog, that sort of thing, doesn't quite work like that. Some of the best value that we get is the fact that we are out across all of that 10,000 kilometre coastline, conducting surveillance and finding nothing. And that is the best news.

Desley Darby: You've seen here... You may have seen what Darren showed before in terms of the areas that were circled, what you're looking at now is our current ranges that we've engaged on a fee-for-service contracts. So you can see we've got around 68 groups across Northern Australia. And we are working very actively with those groups to build capability, which I'll get to in a moment. I just wanted to give you one more example from the fee-for-service arrangement. So this year for 2021, we're looking at doing 970 fee-for-service activities. And again, that's the sort of thing that Darren talked about, community, Animal Health reporting, aquatic biosecurity activities, plant host mapping activities, and a range of other things. This works out to be around 12,500 Ranger hours and over 4,900 travel hours for Rangers. Compared to the last couple of years, we were looking at around 450 fee-for-service activities. So we're really starting to ramp up what Rangers are doing in that space.

Desley Darby: The other thing that underpins the programme is capability building initiatives, there is no point in asking Rangers to deliver fee-for-service activities if we're not prepared to invest in it. And that's not only around equipment and training, but it's about longer term leader building. And I say that building leadership because if you remember back to the vision, the whole thing is about reducing government intervention so to speak in doing the biosecurity work on ground and increasing and having the custodians of the land actually do that work for us and playing a key partnership in biosecurity in Northern Australia. So some of the things that we're working on in that space is again, not only the training and equipment, but we're actually developing a Cert IV and Tropical Biosecurity as well and engaging the Rangers to undertake that training. So that again, we can step out and they can step up. A couple of the other things that we're doing in the Ranger space may not necessarily involve Rangers itself, but it's very closely targeted to biosecurity and again, very much encouraging indigenous communities to take a lead in biosecurity. Those things include business opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to view biosecurity as an opportunity, a business opportunity. And this is about giving back.

Desley Darby: A lot of the times and when we're in the question and answer sort of session, Mary, one of my colleagues will be here. A lot of the times as we may have heard previously, their considerations to culture has not always been at the forefront of a lot of big biosecurity decision making activities, we believe, particularly in the Torres Strait and through the Torres Strait biosecurity working group that we've been trying to address that. And as I say, if you're interested in that Mary will be joining us to talk about that. But this biosecurity as a business opportunity taps into that, it tries to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to view biosecurity not necessarily as a hindrance, but as a business opportunity. The other thing that we're doing across in Northern Australia and it's only a pilot at the moment is biosecurity traineeships.

Desley Darby: Look, that's a small programme but it's about investing in not only young school leavers but also other individuals who can apply. And that's about identifying employment opportunities across the north that firstly relate to biosecurity in terms of developing skills, and capabilities around biosecurity, but it's also looking broader. So we're looking at the AFP, we're looking at the Queensland Government, we're looking at the Torres Strait Regional Authority. What sort of skills do those organisations need? And can we use the training that we do for our biosecurity trainees to help sell or help build those skills in people that are living up north, they're from the land, they're from that country, they know the area so that we don't have to go down South and look for people to come up and fill those positions? So, that's what the biosecurity traineeships are like.

Desley Darby: We've got a pretty extensive KPI programme in place, which we monitor constantly and again we'll be doing another review to see how we're going. But if we can go back to what I said in the first place, there's a couple of key outcomes that we're after. And once again, that's enhanced by security capability in Northern Australia, delivered primarily by indigenous communities. Along with that comes economic opportunities for indigenous communities in Northern Australia. And we've seen that by some of the training that has been completed, we have been able to... Some communities have been able to leverage that training into other funding sources. And of course, as all of us are taxpayers, we want to do that in a efficient and effective manner. So look, that's it from me, thank you. I'm saddened that we couldn't play our video, we did have one of our indigenous Rangers talking about what a caring for country means to him and for future generations. I think it would have put this into a nutshell. But Nick, unless Darren has anything else further to say that's it from us from Sunny North Queensland.

Nick Housego: Thank you very much. Ladies and gents, we've gone through all those presentations, and we have had to consume a lot of our question and answer time, we still and we must finish at 2:30 at Canberra time. So we haven't got that licence to let that drag on a little bit further. So we've got three questions. I'm hoping we'll be able to get through those three questions. And they're going to pick up Desley and Darren first. The first question we've got... Someone noted that on your Ranger map, it had all those lovely the places locations for where Rangers are, but the Torres Strait was empty. Do you not do any work in the Torres Strait?

Desley Darby: We do a lot of work in the Torres Strait. So the Torres Strait Rangers... Actually, under the Torres Strait Regional Authority, so at the moment, we don't engage those guys on a fee-for-service basis that is changing, but an I will hand over to Darren about some of the work that we do in the Torres Strait, our Torres Strait staff, 100% from the Torres Strait. And we work very closely with Torres Strait Rangers and other indigenous communities.

Nick Housego: I'll leave that as the answer. That's good. We'll hold it because I've got to get to others. Melanie, how important is that community engagement for you to get your biosecurity arrangements in place? Can you just arrive and do or do you actually have to get good strong conversations happening across your communities to your biosecurity movement happening?

Melanie: In definitely the latter so engagement and as vital and underpins everything we do. So we operate from a grassroots up model, we kind of come at a view that indigenous people already have the capability. I know that people argue there, I've got a view that indigenous people are being pumped through universities pretty quickly. They're just struggling to get jobs in our systems. So we try and work from the grassroots up and get those people who have maybe got a degree and gone home and are doing kind of menial work because they can't get jobs in the cities. And we try and get them back into the system and work with them to understand how do we get them to enjoy their programme and our delivery.

Nick Housego: Okay, thank you. Moving across to Fraser Island, Tilly and Susan. Fraser Island, as we all know, in Australia is very much a tourist hotspot, how challenging is it to run a detailed and very specific biosecurity programme in there looking at the Myrtle rust? Does the tourism get in the way of it? Or is it an actual accelerator for getting more knowledge?

Sue Sargent: Just from our perspective that the complications are that the tourists actually provide us with most of our challenges. Obviously, Myrtle rust is airborne, so that was a slightly different challenge. But most of the biosecurity pests that have entered onto K'Gari have come via people and also plant materials, and other things that people have brought on to the island. So dealing with tourists is an ongoing challenge and the future pest project that we're working on with the university at Melbourne at the moment, is looking at how potentially we could reduce those risks in the future. So, hopefully some of that will actually be working more closely with the tourism industry and with tourism visitors to the island as well. So huge challenge for the Butchulla people on Gari.

Nick Housego: Sue, Tilly, Melanie. Desley, Darren, thank you very much for your engagement. Time and technology beat us, as it often does. Thank you for your willingness, your patience, what a great series of programmes we just saw being delivered. Wonderful. Tilly, most apologetic sorry about your computers. All right, we're going to close off here in Canberra. It's been a fantastic session. Thank you very much. Bye for now.

[Webinar ends]