



## Northern Australia quarantine strategy in focus

*Public hearing 10 October 2012 in Canberra*

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) will appear before the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit tomorrow to discuss quarantine management activities in northern Australia.

The Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy (NAQS) is an early detection and warning system to address the unique biosecurity risks that face northern Australia. NAQS border operations involve inspecting southbound movements of traditional visitors, vessels, and aircraft in the Torres Strait and the seizure of quarantine risk material.

ANAO Audit Report No. 46 of 2011–12, *Administration of the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy* found that although administration of the NAQS has been effective, aspects of the program could be improved to better inform management decision making and to enable the department to more adequately demonstrate the program's objectives and achievements.

The report also identified weaknesses in the department's management of scientific data. Data entry activities were not adequately monitored and capacity constraints were identified in the functionality of the NAQS Database, limiting the storage and use of survey data and diagnostic results. The ANAO made three recommendations to: strengthen arrangements for managing scientific surveillance data, improve the integrity of border operations data; and to build a more comprehensive performance measurement and reporting framework.

Representatives from the ANAO and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry will appear before the committee in Canberra on **Wednesday 10 October** from approximately **12:15pm** in **Committee Room 2R1, Parliament House, Canberra**.

More information about the hearing can be found on the committee's website at: [www.aph.gov.au/jcpaa](http://www.aph.gov.au/jcpaa) under 'Current Inquiries – Review of Auditor-General's Reports'

**The hearing will be broadcast live at:** [www.aph.gov.au/live](http://www.aph.gov.au/live)

**For media comment:** please contact the Committee Chair, Rob Oakeshott MP, on telephone (02) 6584 2911

**For information about the hearing:** please contact the Committee Secretariat on telephone (02) 6277 4615, e-mail [jcpaa@aph.gov.au](mailto:jcpaa@aph.gov.au), or visit the Committee website <http://www.aph.gov.au/jcpaa>