

BORDER SECURITY

AUSTRALIA'S FRONT LINE

CUSTOMS AND REALITY TV

A reality show which takes viewers behind the scenes of Customs activities to protect Australia's borders has aired on national television for the first time.

The Seven Network's *Border Security* featured the work of Customs, Quarantine and Immigration officers at locations around Australia.

Filed with the full co-operation of the three agencies, the series generated strong public interest given the current focus on national security and border protection.

Network Seven's crews spent more than six months filming *Border Security* from January 2004.

They followed Customs officers at airports, air freight depots, mail centres and container examination facilities in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

Filming also took place on board Customs Coastwatch aircraft and at sea on Customs National Marine Unit vessels operating out of Darwin and Thursday Island in the Torres Strait.

Stories featured in the series included drug and weapons busts, potential wildlife smuggling cases, and the discovery of strange objects people try to smuggle into the country.

Alleged tourists were questioned over suspect passports, nervous passengers raised the suspicions of officers, and Customs marine unit vessels patrolled Australia's northern waters for illegal fishing vessels.

Several travellers featured in the series are now in jail serving sentences for drug trafficking.

Segments were also filmed concerning the work of Customs partner agencies at the border, including the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service and the Australian Fisheries Management Authority.

The series provided a rare insight into the close working relationship between Customs officers and their colleagues from these agencies.

It also highlighted the regulations which apply to the import and export of a wide range of goods.