



Introduction of Australian visa application centres in Pakistan

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship is pleased to announce the introduction of Australian visa application centres (AVACs) across Pakistan.

From 10 December 2012, AVACs will operate in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi. The locations of the three AVACs are:

- Australian Visa Application Centre Islamabad, 14–B, Sadiq Plaza, G–9 Markaz, Islamabad
- Australian Visa Application Centre Karachi, 43/1/D, Razi Road, PECHS, Shahrah-e-Faisal, Karachi
- Australian Visa Application Centre Lahore, 20, Ex American Centre Building, Opp. Ganga Ram Hospital, Queens Road, Lahore

AVAC Services

The collection of biometrics from visa applicants overseas is part of an Australian Government border management initiative. AVACs will provide improvements to service delivery across Pakistan, by providing more convenient access to immigration and citizenship services for clients.

In addition to lodgement of visa applications and biometrics services, the AVACs will also offer additional user pays service options including; SMS notifications, photo booth, an internet kiosk and photocopying services.

Lodging an application at an AVAC

To avoid long waiting times, applicants are required to make an appointment at an Australian Visa Application Centre prior to lodging their application and/or having their biometrics collected. Each person included in the visa application must attend the Australian Visa Application Centre or an Australian Biometric Collection Centre in person to have their biometrics collected.

Opening hours of AVACs will be 8.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday, with phone lines operating until 5.00 pm Monday to Saturday. Client service officers who speak both Urdu and English are available.

Visa application lodgement and the biometric data collection process

Clients lodging visa applications in Pakistan, regardless of nationality, will need to provide their fingerprints and a digital facial photograph as part of visa application processing.

The biometrics that will be collected are a facial image with a digital camera and a 10-digit fingerprint scan with a digital finger scanner.

Exclusions

Australian citizens, Australian permanent residents and New Zealand citizens are excluded from biometrics collection.

Applicants who apply online and meet the requirements for an electronic visa or Electronic Travel Authority are also excluded from the program.

Applicants who are under 15 years of age, persons incapable of providing consent, or those physically unable to provide a fingerprint scan, will only need to provide a facial photograph.

If an applicant is incapable or under 18 years of age, a parent or legal guardian will be asked to give consent and be present when biometrics are collected.

Processing of applications lodged at an AVAC

All applications will continue to be assessed and decided by the immigration section of the local Australian High Commission Islamabad. Staff at the AVAC will have no involvement in the decision-making process or have any knowledge of the application outcome.

The AVAC will provide a tracking facility that allows clients to see the status of their application. All client enquiries should be directed to the AVAC in the first instance.

What are Biometrics?

The term 'biometrics' commonly refers to a measurable physical characteristic or personal behavioural trait that is unique to an individual such as fingerprints, facial structure, the iris or a person's voice.

Biometric data is an important tool in identity management globally, helping countries reduce fraud and integrity risks. France, Ireland, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and countries in the Middle East have already introduced biometrics to improve visa and border checking processes.

More information

For more information about lodging your application

See:

www.australiavisa-pakistan.com

www.immi.gov.au/contacts/overseas/p/pakistan/

For more information about the biometrics program

See:

www.immi.gov.au/allforms/biometrics/offshore/

ATTACHMENT A

Persons and categories of visa applicants exempt or excluded from having their biometrics collected

Persons Excluded from the Biometrics in Offshore Visa Processing Program

- Australian citizens and Australian Permanent Residents
- Applicants for an Australian Declaratory Visa or Australian citizenship
- New Zealand citizens
- Applicants who are eligible to apply for, and have been granted, an Australian visa online (including Electronic Travel Authority)
- APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC) holders

Persons Exempt from Biometrics Collection

- Sovereigns, Heads of State and members of their families forming part of their household, whether travelling officially or privately
- Heads of Government, Cabinet Ministers and their immediate family members travelling to Australia, whether travelling officially or privately
- Diplomats and consular officers accredited to Australia and their dependants (dependants must also be accredited and hold a subclass 995 visa)
- Senior government officials and senior officials of international inter-government organisations (including the Commonwealth) and accompanying family members
- Diplomatic Passport Holders visiting Australia on official business for their government and Diplomatic Couriers
- Special Purpose Visa (SPV) holders