

Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity
Inquiry into the integrity of Australia's border arrangements
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Infrastructure and Regional Development

Program: n/a

Division/Agency: Office of Transport Security

Topic: Visitor identification cards (VICs) – In relation to the findings of the ANAO Audit Report No.39 2010 -11 – *Management of the Aviation and Maritime Security Identification Card Schemes*.

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Question:

Senator McKenzie noted the ANAO's report identified that large numbers of visitor identification cards (VICs) were being used to enter secure areas. Senator McKenzie asked if this has been addressed? If so how? Senator McKenzie also asked what are the Department's plans to deal with the large number of VICs?

Answer:

The VIC scheme is the formal management mechanism for visitors to security controlled airports. It was implemented to provide flexibility for the continuity of airport operations. OTS monitors industry's regulatory compliance with VIC requirements through its audit activities.

Following the ANAO audit, OTS implemented changes to the VIC scheme. These changes included:

- That an individual could only be issued a VIC for a maximum of 28 days within a 12-month period.
- Centralised VIC issuing with the authority to issue VICs revoked from airport tenants and limited to airport operators, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, and Secretary-approved VIC issuers (currently only Qantas is approved).
- That VIC issuers required to meet enhanced record keeping requirements.

In 2014, OTS completed a post-implementation review to evaluate the effectiveness of the VIC enhancements. The review found that the introduction of the 28-day rule resulted in an increase in ASIC applications from individuals who had previously operated using VICs. This initial increase stabilised as the enhancements became business as usual.

The centralisation of VIC issuing has supported the 28-day rule by providing the airport operator with primary control and visibility of all visitors seeking and obtaining access. In addition, enhanced record keeping requirements have improved data quality with a single centralised register for each airport containing more detailed information about VIC usage.

During October 2016, OTS conducted a national compliance campaign on VICs to determine industry's compliance with regulatory obligations regarding VIC display, VIC issuing and VIC reporting management arrangements. The campaign found:

- a lack of clarity in the use of VICs by screening officers;
- a high number of VICs being issued by some airports;
- inconsistencies in process for transferring information in VIC registers between entities; and
- variations in the design and format of VIC registers.

OTS has previously written to industry advising that all screening officers must hold, and while on duty, display a valid ASIC. Industry were also advised, that trainee screening officers who had applied for an ASIC; are not making independent screening decisions; and are constantly supervised by a qualified screening officer, are able to use a VIC. OTS undertakes compliance activities to ensure these requirements are met. In addition, OTS is currently exploring a range of policy options to address the campaign's findings and enhance the VIC scheme.