



Submission No 21

Inquiry into Australia's Overseas Representation

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**SUBMISSION
BY
THE DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP
TO THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
DEFENCE AND TRADE
IN RELATION TO THE INQUIRY INTO
AUSTRALIA'S OVERSEAS REPRESENTATION**

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DIAC activities within overseas posts

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) manages the permanent and temporary entry of people to Australia, and the settlement of migrants and refugees. DIAC is operating in a complex environment where countries compete internationally to attract highly skilled workers, students and tourists and there are increased security risks around the flow of people across borders. It is a high volume, global operation with most clients, and many key stakeholders, residing offshore.

As at August 2011, 128 DIAC staff were posted to 60 overseas locations. In addition there were 1026 Locally Engaged Staff (LES) employed on immigration work.

Within Australian missions, DIAC's work is focussed on:

- managing the processing of the migration, temporary, humanitarian and citizenship caseloads that remain offshore;
- building and maintaining effective working relationships with key stakeholders and business partners in host countries and the surrounding region, including to share information on border control, facilitate removals and facilitate the travel to Australia of properly documented people;
- identifying and reporting on the activities of people smugglers and irregular people movements;
- undertaking capacity building work to strengthen border control arrangements in a range of key countries;
- identifying and countering malpractice in the visa and citizenship caseloads;
- managing effective service delivery to clients offshore in line with Australian community standards;
- managing overseas contracts with service delivery partners; and
- representing and advocating the Australian Government's immigration and citizenship policies.

Over the last decade there has been an increase in the balance of Australian-based staff working offshore who are specialist compliance and Airline Liaison Officers compared to visa processing staff. This is in response to enhanced focus on security as well as new, more efficient ways of doing business. At the same time, DIAC has responded to a range of international crises such as the Arab Spring, unrest in Bangkok and natural disasters in Japan and New Zealand, assisting people to travel across borders at short notice or to remain lawfully in Australia, as necessary.

In 2010-11 DIAC delivered:

- a migration program of over 168 000 places with the top five source countries being China, the United Kingdom, India, the Philippines and South Africa;
- over 3.5 million visitor visas with the top three source countries being the United Kingdom, the United States and Japan but significant increases in visitors from China and Malaysia;
- a humanitarian program of almost 13 800 places that included 8 900 visas granted to people outside Australia with the top five source countries being Iraq, Burma, Bhutan, Afghanistan and Congo; and
- 95 000 people conferred Australian citizenship.

DIAC managed the delivery of these programs on a global basis with a significant portion of these visas processed overseas where the client is located. Offshore processing occurs where there are significant benefits to caseload integrity, given specialised local knowledge, or the need for face-to-face interviews.

The geographic location and spread of DIAC offices

DIAC manages its operations in around 60 overseas locations. Program delivery is managed by 13 global managers based in Australia and posts are managed under a regional structure by eight Regional Directors located offshore.

DIAC's presence overseas is determined by factors such as workload demands, volumes and risks; the geographical spread of clients; the need to provide reasonable access to services for clients; and budget considerations.

DIAC's eight overseas regions are structured as follows:

- the East Asia Region has offices in Beijing, Bangkok, Guangzhou, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Hong Kong, Phnom Penh, Seoul and Shanghai and satellite posts managed by LES in Taipei, Tokyo, Rangoon and Vientiane;
- the South Asia region has offices in New Delhi, Colombo and Dhaka;
- the South East Asia region has offices in Jakarta, Dili, Kuala Lumpur, Manila and Singapore and a satellite post managed by LES in Bali;
- the Middle East region has offices in Dubai, Amman, Ankara, Beirut, Cairo, Islamabad and Tehran, a satellite post managed by LES in Nicosia and Riyadh and two liaison staff on rotation in Kabul;
- the Africa region has offices in Nairobi and Pretoria and satellite posts managed by LES in Harare and Port Louis;
- the South Pacific region has offices in Suva, Auckland and Port Moresby and satellite posts managed by LE in Apia, Noumea, Nuku'alofa, Pohnpei, Port Vila, Tarawa and Honiara;
- the Americas region has offices in Washington, Brasilia, Ottawa and Santiago and satellite posts managed by LES in Mexico City and Buenos Aires; and
- the Europe region has offices in London, Berlin, Moscow and Belgrade, satellite posts managed by LES in Athens, Madrid, Tel Aviv, Vienna and Zagreb and an officer in Geneva who liaises with the United Nations.

Third party providers, known as Service Delivery Partners (SDPs), provide additional access to DIAC services offshore, providing extended opening hours and offices in a broader range of locations than DIAC offices that are part of Australian missions. SDPs do not make visa decisions but their services include receiving visa applications and charges, delivering applications to the relevant DIAC office, providing basic client information, arranging client appointments and returning passports. DIAC offices in Bangkok, Manila, Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, New Delhi, Pretoria, Jakarta, Suva, Port Moresby and Auckland provide local contract management of these SDP services in their region.

In addition, DIAC has been partnering with SDPs in rolling out the collection of biometrics in 15 countries (ie Bahrain, Bangladesh, France, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, United Arab Emirates,

Yemen and Zimbabwe) across approximately 40 visa subclasses. This is a consequence of a decision by Government announced on 23 February 2010.

In 2011-12 DIAC is working towards expanding its SDP arrangements in Africa, South Asia and the South Pacific.

Anticipated changes in the business environment - including SDP arrangements, the expansion of online lodgement, which will reduce the need for clients to contact a visa office, and budget priorities - continue to impact the location and geographic spread of DIAC offshore offices. In 2011 DIAC has closed several offices including offices in Brunei, Paris, Warsaw, Budapest, Rome and Nauru. Since the mid-90s, DIAC has closed offices in a range of other cities including Honolulu, Houston, New York, San Francisco, Toronto, Caracas, Copenhagen, Berne, Manchester, Vancouver, Dublin, Osaka, Damascus, Wellington, Lagos, Mumbai, Istanbul, Kathmandu, Los Angeles, Stockholm, Oslo, the Hague, Lisbon, Brussels and Malta. At the same time, it has redirected resources to managing its operations in countries with higher risk caseloads or where demand has increased exponentially such as in China and India. DIAC has opened a small number of new offices including offices in Guangzhou (1995), Vientiane (1998), Dili (1999) and Riyadh (2008).

DIAC's locally engaged staff (LES) profile

As at 31 August 2011, there were 1026 LES staff employed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to undertake work for DIAC. They were managed by 128 Australian-based staff. The table below provides a snapshot of the numbers of A-based and LES at each post on that date.

LES at DIAC offices overseas as at 31 August 2011

Location	A-based staff	Locally engaged staff*	Location	A-based staff	Locally engaged staff
Amman	5	25	Mexico City	0	3
Ankara	2	13	Moscow	3	19
Apia	0	3	Nairobi	4	19
Athens	0	2	Nauru	0	1
Auckland	1	10	New Delhi	9	111
Bali	0	3	Nicosia	0	2
Bangkok	7	30	Noumea	0	2
Beijing	5	40	Nuku'alofa	0	3
Beirut	2	13	Ottawa	2	25
Belgrade	2	13	Phnom Penh	2	11
Berlin	3	29	Pohnpei	0	1
Brasilia	2	11	Port Louis	0	3
Buenos Aires	0	4	Port Moresby	2	11
Cairo	2	17	Port Vila	0	2
Colombo	4	17	Pretoria	5	29
Dhaka	2	11	Rangoon	0	3
Dili	1	2	Riyadh	0	2
Dubai	6	25	Rome	0	1

Geneva	1	1	Santiago	2	17
Guangzhou	4	57	Seoul	1	10
Hanoi	3	17	Shanghai	6	82
Harare	0	2	Singapore	1	12
Ho Chi Minh City	4	34	Suva	4	16
Hong Kong	2	34	Taipei	0	5
Honiara	0	2	Tarawa	0	1
Islamabad	2	13	Tehran	2	16
Jakarta	7	36	Tel Aviv	0	6
Kabul	2	0	Tokyo	0	5
Kuala Lumpur	4	16	Vienna	0	6
London	5	59	Vientiane	0	2
Madrid	0	4	Warsaw	0	2
Manila	6	36	Washington	2	16
			Zagreb	0	2

*Numbers were provided by DFAT and are a headcount of total staff at post during the month of August. The table excludes the 14 specialist Airline Liaison Officers.

DIAC's Australian-based staff ensure that departmental programs are implemented overseas in line with Australian expectations and priorities and LES provide local knowledge and language skills, as well as assistance with visa processing and decision making, at relatively low cost. The balance of Australian based staff and LES is regularly reviewed within resource constraints to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of offshore operations.

Enhancing service delivery using modern technologies

DIAC is committed to continuing to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the way it does business through innovative service delivery on and offshore. Currently we are focussing on progressing our e-business strategy, redesigning our website, managing client interactions through service centres and using service delivery partners where practicable to further support existing operations. Each of these initiatives are impacting the work of the department's offshore offices.

DIAC has progressively moved more visa categories to electronic lodgement in recent years, particularly to client groups that demonstrate compliance with visa conditions and where safeguards can be put in place to ensure the integrity of the Australian visa program. Clients from a broad range of countries can now apply for a range of visas, particularly temporary entry visas, online. To date in 2011 DIAC has expanded the availability of the Electronic Tourist Visa (e676) to nationals of the Maldives, Chile, Croatia and Turkish officials and special passport holders. DIAC is aiming to further expand e-Visa access to clients over the next three years.

Concurrently, DIAC has commenced a phased Web Redevelopment Project to further improve its external website. The first phase involves the redevelopment of information on skilled visas and is due to be completed by 30 June 2012. The website is being updated to better meet client expectations reducing the need for them to contact the department directly.

For clients who do require some assistance, DIAC's global strategy for service centres is moving from geographically-based call centres to globally integrated service centres with multi channel support to handle phone, email and web enquiries. A first step in this process has been the recent consolidation of DIAC's European call centre operations in London with the establishment of the European Service Centre offering DIAC services in a range of European languages. The new arrangements are bedding down but are already enabling DIAC to ensure more consistent information distribution and better resource utilisation. DIAC operates service centres in Sydney, Melbourne, London and Ottawa.

International engagement

DIAC's international engagement is underpinned by building and maintaining effective relationships with host governments, and engagement in regional and multilateral process to encourage approaches to managed migration and border security that support or complement Australia's interests, in advancing the international protection framework and through contributing to whole-of-government efforts to combat people smuggling, people trafficking, irregular migration and terrorism.

Overseas staff play a critical role negotiating bilateral agreements and initiating and managing the delivery of capacity building projects in key regional countries. Overseas staff also represent and advocate Australia's immigration and citizenship policies in debates on managed migration and refugee issues with international organisations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration and the Inter-Governmental Consultations on Asylum, Refugee and Migration Policies and support and advocate Australia's position in multilateral fora including the Bali Process on People Smuggling, People Trafficking and Related Transnational Crime; the Five Country Conference and the Pacific Immigration Directors Conference.

Ongoing resource constraints and changes in DIAC's environment require it to remain flexible and adaptable in its offshore operations. DIAC remains committed to taking advantage of opportunities offered by new technology that support it to deliver services more efficiently and effectively and achieve its aim to be the best immigration and citizenship department in the world.

DIAC would welcome the opportunity to provide additional information on any areas of particular interest to the Committee on request, including on an in-confidence basis.