



# Biometrics in Offshore Visa Processing

## New Visa Application Procedure in Cambodia

Australia will introduce a new visa application procedure for visa applicants from 17 December 2012 in Cambodia.

From 17 December 2012 visa applicants will need to lodge their visa applications in person and provide their biometrics at the Australian Embassy in Phnom Penh.

If more than one person is intending to travel, everyone in the group will need to come to the Australian Embassy to lodge their visa applications, and have their biometrics collected.

### Background

The Biometrics in Offshore Visa Processing Program (the program) is an Australian Government initiative that introduces the collection of biometrics into the offshore visa application process.

The first stage of the program has included visa applications processed at ten Australian missions across Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

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.

Biometrics are an important tool in identity management globally, helping countries reduce fraud and integrity risks. France, Ireland, Japan, the United Kingdom (UK), the United States (USA) and

countries in the Middle East have already introduced biometrics to improve visa and border checking processes.

The benefits of collecting biometrics include:

- better protecting clients from identity fraud
- making travel to Australia safer
- strengthening Australia's border security
- improving national security.

### **Selection of Australian missions and participating countries**

The overseas locations were selected on the basis of:

- the Australian government's intention to provide broad geographic coverage for the scheme and to test biometric collection across a range of client service environments
- Australia's national security and fraud risks in visa caseloads.

### **Program commencement**

The program has already commenced in Bahrain, Bangladesh, France, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, United Arab Emirates, Yemen and Zimbabwe. The program is now being rolled out in Cambodia. Further countries will be progressively announced.

### **Visa application lodgement and the biometric collection process**

The Australian Embassy is located in Phnom Penh. The address is:

No. 16B National Assembly Street  
Sangkat Tonle Bassac  
Khan Chamkamon  
Phnom Penh

Biometrics will be collected using a quick, discreet and non-intrusive process that captures a facial image with a digital camera and a 10-digit fingerprint scan with a digital finger scanner.

Applicants will not be charged an additional fee for the collection of their biometrics.

## **Safekeeping and use of biometrics**

Facial images and fingerprint scans will be kept on secure departmental databases. Only authorised officers under the *Migration Act 1958* (the Act), as regulated by the *Privacy Act 1988*, may access the biometrics of applicants.

Under the Act, the department is allowed to provide the fingerprints and photographs of applicants to certain Australian Government departments and agencies in addition to international organisations and countries for a permitted purpose. This includes for the purpose of verifying identity, checking whether a client has effective protection in another country, combating identity fraud or determining if the client has a criminal history.

In all cases where biometrics are provided to other agencies or countries, the department will take steps to protect the applicant's privacy.

## **Exclusions and exemptions**

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. Some people, for example Heads of State and accredited diplomats, are exempt from the program.

For a list of exclusions and exemptions see **Attachment A**.

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 is collected.

## **Contact**

If you would like more information on the program please visit

<http://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, members of the Council of 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