



**High Commission of India
Canberra**

MEDIA RELEASE

AN UPDATE ON THE OUTSOURCING OF PASSPORT, VISA & OCI SERVICE

Police Clearance and Driving Licence Verifications also outsourced
New Look VFS website
New information delivery services
Payments by EFTPOS and credit cards at VFS outlets

It is almost two years now since the High Commission of India and the Consulates General outsourced visa, passport and OCI services to M/s VFS Services Australia Pty Limited.

The feedback that has been received on the utility of the outsourcing by way of delivering convenient, fast and customer-friendly services has been overwhelmingly positive. While there are certain areas where there is scope for improvement, the outsourcing has resulted in quicker and more efficient delivery of visa, passport and OCI services by the High Commission and the Consulates. **Waiting times, both to lodge applications as well as for completion of service asked for, have reduced significantly.** This is especially important when one considers that the demand for passport & OCI services has gone up significantly (*by 42% for passports and 13% for OCIs*) over the past two years.

At certain peak periods, for instance, in November and December, delivery of services has taken a little longer than usual in some instances. In order to ensure that this does not happen again, measures have now been put into place that will ensure delivery of services within a certain number of days for each category of service. (*For detailed time lines, please see website*)

The Visa Application Centres now provide a free online tracking service available 24 x 7 and also a free email service with dedicated email help lines, that are responded to within 2 working days. All information related to the services provided is also available on a dedicated website www.vfs-in-au.net In case applicants wish to seek information instantly, they may call the 'user pays' service numbers. It may be noted that any optional services required by a user are 'pay for' services that VFS provides, based on applicant feedback and to facilitate and assist the applicant.

A new and improved VFS website providing information on Indian Passport and Visa services has been launched on March 31, 2010. New services have been added and applicants will benefit from the ease of viewing and navigation on the website; they can find desired information for a major category in less than 3 clicks, or get information on applicable fees more easily by simply selecting the appropriate nationality.

The VFS website may also be accessed through the High Commission and Consulate websites.

In response to a longstanding demand from the Indian Community, it is now possible to pay fees at VFS centres and online on the VFS website through EFTPOS and credit card payments. In fact, these easy to use payment options now account for almost 53% of total applications.

The visa application centres are also open without break for longer consular hours than most consular acceptances hours – from 8.30 am to 3.00 pm on all working days as well as on many Indian Holidays, and operate in 6 cities across Australia.

Given the efficiency of the outsourcing, as also the sharp increase in applications for Police Clearance Certificate (PCC) and India Driver License Verification (IDLV) services, it has been decided to also outsource these services, with effect from April 01, 2010. Please remember this so that you do not waste time coming to the High Commission or Consulate offices for these services. We have no doubt that the outsourcing of these services will improve delivery times and efficiency in this area as well.

While there is a service charge for this, this too compares favourably with the service charges being levied by some other Embassies that have outsourced their services in Australia, which are in some cases, nearly double the amount that is charged at our visa application centres.

We look forward to continuing to receive your feedback and your suggestions and to delivering even better service in the future.

March 31, 2010