



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

28 September 2023

IS23-000010

Ms Sophie Dunstone
Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Dunstone

**Inquiry into the Identity Verification Services Bill 2023 and
Identity Verification Services (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2023**

Identity Verification Services (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2023

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (the department) provides this submission to assist the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee (the Committee) in its review of the Identity Verification Services (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2023.

The Australian Passport Office, as a business division of the department issues passports and travel documents to Australian citizens in Australia and overseas in accordance with the *Australian Passports Act 2005*, related Laws and the Conventions on International Civil Aviation. These documents facilitate international travel, serve as proof of identity and citizenship which enables citizens to access essential government and financial services, and are crucial for maintaining national security and preventing fraud.

Document Verification Service and Face Verification Service

The department uses the Document Verification Service (DVS) in its passport issuance process. The DVS allows the department to securely validate biographical information contained in Australian state/territory government-issued identity credentials, such as driver's licences or birth certificates. DVS validation is critical to the Australian passport retaining its National Identity Proofing Guidelines (NIPG) level of assurance of four - Very High ('Gold standard').

In turn, the Australian passport's NIPG level four status gives other government agencies a high level of confidence when verifying biometric information through the Face Verification Service (FVS). Government programs that have used FVS to validate passport information include myGov (operated by the Australian Taxation Office) and the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment (operated by Services Australia).

Should the Bill be enacted, DVS and FVS will continue to allow for the department to securely validate relevant documents as part of its processes and deliver one of the world's most trusted and secure travel documents.

The department supports the new insertion of amendments to section 46 of the *Australian Passports Act 2005* that enables automated disclosure of information for identity verification services where appropriate and lawful to do so.

Automated verification provides Australians with robust identity security and aligns with the Government's broader digital identity work underway.

Yours sincerely

Craig MacLachlan
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