

Explanatory Statement

Proposed updates to the WHOIS Policy

1. Purpose of this explanatory statement

The purpose of this explanatory statement is to explain:

- The process that applies when making administrative changes to an auDA published policy.
- The proposed changes to WHOIS Policy which was last reviewed in 2018.
- The timeline for this process.

2. Our multi stakeholder approach to policy review

This is an auDA managed policy development process in accordance with section 44 of the [Process for the Development and Review of auDA Published Policies Policy](#). This process is for managing minor policy amendments, where the change is required for administrative, technical or legal reasons.

Public consultation plays an important role in ensuring the best outcome for this review.

Public submissions will be published on our website.

The auDA Board will be advised of the subject matter of submissions and will review any changes to the draft legacy policies and the explanatory statement, as a result of submissions.

3. Background

The [public WHOIS service](#) is a standard feature of domain systems globally allowing the public to find information related to a domain name registration. The WHOIS service provides members of the public with a public subset of data about a domain name registration through two 'access interfaces' – a [website](#) or via the [port 43 WHOIS](#) protocol (which is intended for automated access to the WHOIS service by other internet-based services). The WHOIS service is supported by the [WHOIS Policy](#) (July 2018) which sets out the principles, collection, disclosure and use of WHOIS data in the .au namespace.

This policy requires an update to document a third interface for accessing registration data – through the technical standard [Registration Data Access Protocol \(RDAP\)](#). RDAP



was developed by the [Internet Engineering Taskforce](#) (IETF) and is the modern replacement for the legacy port-43 WHOIS protocol used to provide information about domain name registrations. Unlike the port-43 WHOIS protocol, which delivers unstructured text responses, RDAP provides data in a standardised, machine-readable JSON format. This allows for greater consistency, security, and interoperability across registries and registrars that manage domain names and internet number resources.

RDAP uses the same underlying registration data as WHOIS and serves the same policy purposes — primarily transparency, accountability, and support for law enforcement, cybersecurity, and consumer protection activities.

4. Summary of changes

A redlined version of the policy is attached (**Attachment A**), with the key updates summarised as:

- Adding references to the new RDAP interface and the relevant .au Licensing Rules reference
- Specifying the privacy legislation
- Inclusion of .au direct (e.g. forexample.au) as a new namespace since the last policy update
- Replacing the original method of Image Verification Check (IVC) with the more modern CAPTCHA, which is an update in technology that auDA has made to mitigate data mining
- Expanding the table in Schedule A that explains the distinctions between the three WHOIS interfaces

5. Timeline

The proposed changes to the WHOIS policy will be open for public consultation for 30 days starting on Monday 15 December 2025 and ending at 5pm on Friday 23 January 2026.