

auDA Public Policy Report

July – September 2025

Summary

This issue covers the first quarter for the financial year 2025-26, providing updates on our internet governance and public policy work. This includes our contributions to the World Summit on the Information Society 20-year review ([WSIS+20](#)), supporting the Australian Internet Governance Forum ([auIGF](#)), and lodging a submission on the governance of the internet root server system to the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers ([ICANN](#)). We also highlight current technology trends in Australia's policy and regulatory landscape and share selected research and engagements relevant to auDA's role as the administrator of the .au country code Top Level Domain (ccTLD).

In July, auDA published its annual [Digital Lives of Australians 2025](#) research, providing key insights into Australians' use of the internet to help inform technology policy and industry practice in Australia. We hosted the [2025's battle for the future of the internet webinar](#), examining the WSIS+20 and the implications for internet governance.

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Domestic public policy matters

Current technology policy trends

The Australian Government progressed several digital regulatory and policy measures this quarter across cyber security, online safety, age assurance, Artificial Intelligence (AI), privacy and digital identity.

- **Cyber security:** The Government advanced consultation on [Horizon 2 \(2026-28\) of the Australian Cyber Security Strategy](#), building on Horizon 1 (2023-25). During the quarter, input was sought on next-phase priorities including local government uplift, incident preparedness and sector coordination. auDA lodged a submission, reaffirming its commitment to secure internet infrastructure and multi-stakeholder collaboration. It further recommends using our Digital Lives research data for the strategy's evaluation model. Crucially, auDA urges sustained government resourcing for engagement in global internet governance (like WSIS+20 and ICANN) to safeguard Australia's digital interests. The submission will be made available on the auDA website in due course. In October, we contributed to the Parliamentary Joint Committee's [Inquiry into combatting crime as a service](#) and provide insights from our recent research findings and our ongoing coordination with law enforcement agencies. [Please refer to our submission on the auDA website.](#)
- **Artificial intelligence:** The Digital Transformation Agency released an [Australian Government AI technical standard](#) for agencies, setting lifecycle requirements for transparency, accountability and safety when procuring and deploying AI systems. In parallel, [the Productivity Commission issued an interim report on its inquiry into Harnessing data and digital technology](#). The report contains draft recommendations across four key areas of reform:
 1. Enable AI's productivity potential
 2. Expand safe data access
 3. Pursue outcomes-based privacy regulation
 4. Progress digital financial reporting.
- **Privacy enforcement:** In September, the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) exercised its expanded enforcement toolkit under [the Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024](#) in a determination against Kmart over in-store facial recognition trials. The OAIC determined that Kmart's collection of sensitive biometric data was indiscriminate and disproportionate. The determination directed remedial steps under the amended law that Kmart must not reinstate the practice, must publish a public statement within 30 days



explaining the breach, and must take corrective governance actions (including updating privacy disclosures and ceasing any unfair collection/retaining of unlawfully collected data). The OAIC also reiterated priority focus areas including biometrics and children's privacy.

- **Digital identity (Digital ID):** The Department of Finance opened [consultation in September](#) on proposed amendments to the *Digital ID Rules 2024* and the *Digital ID (Accreditation) Rules 2024*. Proposed Rules changes would create an incident redress framework for the Australian Government Digital ID System, strengthen reportable-incident oversight by empowering the System Administrator to direct investigations, streamline approvals for government relying parties after machinery-of-government changes, and permit the Digital ID Data Standards Chair to use the Trustmark. Proposed Accreditation Rules changes would adjust application of the Australian Government Protective Security Policy Framework, allow express consent given on behalf of a business to last up to seven years, and defer commencement of certain suspension/resumption obligations for identity service providers to 30 November 2026. Separately, the Government announced a [refresh of the National Identity Proofing Guidelines](#) in September under [the National Strategy for Identity Resilience](#).

Additionally, there has been a focus from government on implementing its [online safety](#) and [social media minimum age](#) policies.

Internet governance and global policy

2025 Australian Internet Governance Forum (auIGF)

The 2025 [auIGF](#) was held as a hybrid event, drawing over 200 participants across in-person attendance in Adelaide and online attendance. As part of the global network of Internet Governance Forums, the auIGF provides a platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue on internet governance in Australia. This year's program – developed via a public call for sessions – covered topics including digital inclusion, trust online, and critical-infrastructure resilience. auDA staff actively participated in the forum and provided secretariat support to the volunteer organising committee.

The Forum agreed to progress development of a [Social Contract on Digital Wellbeing](#), noting the importance that it be practical to implement. It also agreed [messages](#) for the [World Summit on the Information Society: 20-year review \(WSIS+20 review\)](#), calling on the United Nations to strengthen existing UN internet governance structures rather than create new ones, continue and strengthen the [Internet Governance Forum \(IGF\)](#),



maintain inclusive multi-stakeholder processes; and ensure implementation of the [Global Digital Compact](#) does not duplicate the WSIS framework and remains a multi-stakeholder process. [Read more about key takeaways from the 2025 auIGF in our blog.](#)

Pacific Internet Governance Forum & Pacific ccTLD forum

[The Pacific Internet Governance Forum \(PacIGF 2025\)](#) held from 30 June to 4 July was organised by the Pacific Islands Chapter of the Internet Society (PICISOC) and hosted by the Samoa Information Technology Association (SITA), in partnership with various regional stakeholders.

Under the overarching theme of “Digital Inclusion and Safety,” the discussions spanned critical issues such as bridging the digital divide, ensuring affordable access to the Internet in remote islands, developing robust cybersecurity frameworks, and addressing online safety risks, particularly for vulnerable populations. Participants, including government officials, civil society representatives, private sector leaders, and technical experts, engaged in practical sessions aimed at formulating regional policy recommendations.

In a thoughtful keynote address, the Prime Minister of Samoa stated that Digital Inclusion in the Pacific means more than merely installing new cables; it demands making connectivity affordable and accessible for every citizen, regardless of their remote location or ability. She stressed that the region’s prosperity relies on safely navigating the digital landscape, calling for robust strategies to combat cybercrime, misinformation, and online harm, while safeguarding the cultural integrity of Pacific communities online.

Running alongside the PacIGF 2025, auDA, supported and participated in the **second Pacific country code Top-Level Domain (ccTLD) Forum**, in partnership with other Pacific ccTLDs. This forum brought together ten ccTLDs from across the region with other partners including ICANN. The program was developed in collaboration with the ccTLDs, and saw them exchange knowledge, build capacity and strengthen operational resilience. Discussions at the forum covered registry best practices, DNS security, domain policy, and the role of ccTLDs in supporting digital inclusion and robust internet infrastructure across the region.

National Tech Summit

[The Tech Council of Australia’s National Tech Summit](#) was held from 15–17 September 2025 in Sydney, attended by the auDA policy team. The Summit emphasised the role of digital infrastructure, AI and precinct-led innovation in Australia’s tech competitiveness.



At the Summit, the NSW Treasurer, The Hon. Daniel Mookhey MLC, announced the [an Investment Designation Authority](#) committed to accelerate funding to large tech-based projects and cutting red tape. Other keynote speakers included Senator the Hon Tim Ayres, Minister for Industry & Innovation and Minister for Science. Scott Farquhar, co-founder of Atlassian, delivered a plenary scene-setting session on Day 2, and Minister of Industry and Trade, Anoulack Chanthivong provided the Day 3 opening. Collectively, the forum showcased government–industry alignment on technology investment, innovation and skills priorities in Australia.

The Tech Summit's program also covered quantum tech (security use cases and workforce needs), AI adoption and skills (low public trust and the need for AI literacy and micro-credentials), digital inclusion, national security risks to critical infrastructure and scaling challenges for start-ups. Case studies from [Tech Central](#) startups highlight that establishing tech precincts embed and enable innovation infrastructure that connect labs, capital, networks and talent. Updates from industry included “AI-first” network strategies and low-power, long-range Internet-of-Things (IoT) developments.

The Asia Pacific Internet Governance Academy (APIGA 2025)

[APIGA 2025](#) is an internet governance capacity-building programme for youth (18–35) run by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers Asia Pacific Regional Office (ICANN APAC) and the Korea Internet & Security Agency (KISA). APIGA 2025 was held in Busan, South Korea from 18–22 August, combining lectures, interactive workshops and community mentoring. auDA was represented by Elizabeth Pollard, who attended via an APIGA Korea fellowship earned through APIGA Australia 2024, and Rohan Sachdeva who served as a program youth leader. auDA [has announced](#) it will host its second APIGA Australia program (modelled on APIGA) in February 2026. [You can read more about APIGA 2025 via our blog.](#)

Internet Infrastructure Forum

[The Internet Infrastructure Forum](#) brings together content hosting providers and DNS infrastructure operators to identify if and how they could collaborate to prevent content harms on the internet (such as scams and phishing) in a way that respects stakeholders' appropriate roles in the internet ecosystem. It convened in February 2025 and had an intersessional gathering in September 2025. auDA participated in this event and is following this work closely.

Asia Pacific Top Level Domain Association 88 (APTLD 88)

[APTLD 88](#) was held in September 2025 and gathered Asia–Pacific ccTLD registries and partners for policy, technical and operational discussions hosted with The Serbian



National Internet Domain Registry Foundation. auDA staff contributed virtually across multiple sessions including those on addressing sophisticated fake online shops, the responsibilities and limits of ccTLD managers in content governance, and strategies for effective engagement with government on internet governance and domain management issues.

ICANN Review of Reviews

auDA Specialist Policy Advisor, Annaliese Williams, has been appointed by ICANN's Country Code Names Supporting Organisation (ccNSO) as one of two representatives to conduct the 'Review of Reviews'. The Review was established to resolve conflicting review obligations set up under ICANN's bylaws that lead to overlaps, excessive volunteer burden and a lack of quality implementation. The Review will assess the system, and design and seek feedback on a new approach that better supports ICANN's ability to evolve and improve, while respecting the limits of community expertise and volunteer time.

Governance of the internet's root server system

ICANN has sought [public comments](#) on a proposed approach to governance of the internet's Root Server System (RSS). The root servers are at the heart of the DNS enabling a computer to locate a top-level domain server (such as .au or .com). auDA lodged comments broadly welcoming the proposed model, while highlighting that effective risk management of this vital service should be a priority for the governance model. auDA's comment is available on the [auDA website](#).

The World Summit on the Information Society High-Level Event 2025 (WSIS+20 High Level Event)

[The WSIS+20 High-Level Event](#) was held in Geneva held from 7–11 July. This year's event was an important milestone in the progress of the [WSIS+20](#), and provided an opportunity for interactive multi-stakeholder discussion on a broad range of topics across the [WSIS Action Lines](#), such as digital governance, capacity building and sustainable digital transformation. It was held alongside the [AI for Good Global Summit](#), and together these events welcomed more than 11,000 participants from 196 countries onsite.

The WSIS+20 High-Level Event was critical to the future of digital governance, as it gathered input and priorities from governments, industry and civil society to shape the formal WSIS+20 review. The WSIS+20 review will conclude at the [UN General Assembly high-level meeting on 16–17 December 2025](#), where member states will determine the future of the WSIS framework, including the continuation of the Internet Governance



Forum. For more information, you can read the [auDA blog 'What WSIS is and why WSIS+20 matters'](#).

International Telecommunications Union (ITU) World Telecommunication Development conference (WTDC)

Preparations for the [ITU's World Telecommunication Development conference \(WTDC\)](#) to be held in November 2025 are ongoing. The WTDC will set the ITU's priorities to progress global digital development and connectivity over the next four-year cycle. In September, the Asia Pacific region supported by the Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT) finalised the region's proposals for consideration at WTDC. These included priorities that support affordable connectivity, digital inclusion, AI, space technology and cybersecurity.

What we're reading

[Australia's AI ambitions must prioritise digital inclusion](#) (David Spriggs Australian Digital Inclusion Alliance, August 2025)

What it's about: A policy blog arguing that Australia's productivity and AI agenda needs a firm digital-inclusion foundation. It highlights persistent gaps in access, affordability and digital ability, and points to measurable benefits from inclusive digital government services, urging coordinated national action and accountability.

Why we are interested: Digital inclusion underpins secure and effective use of AI-enabled services across the economy. The piece aligns with auDA's focus emerging technology and innovation as contained in [auDA's Public Policy Agenda 2024 - 25](#) and complements evidence from the Australian Digital Inclusion Alliance and the Australian Digital Inclusion Index on closing access, affordability and ability gaps. Furthermore, it aligns with [auDA's Public Benefit Program](#) (e.g. the Community Grant Program funding community-led inclusion and innovation projects;), our new [auDA Churchill Fellowship](#) to advance internet-for-good impact, and our growing evidence based and insights from [auDA research](#), which shows Australians prefer and trust .au and that capability gaps persist—shedding light on the need for coordinated, measurable inclusion efforts.

[The Governance of the Root of the DNS](#) (Geoff Huston, CircleID, August 2025)

What's it about: Huston explains how governance of the DNS Root Server System (RSS) has become more structured, moving from informal arrangements in the late 1980s toward current proposals that formalise roles and accountability. He summarises work



around RSSAC037 (a 2018 advisory from ICANN's Root Server System Advisory Committee titled "A Proposed Governance Model for the DNS Root Server System.") and ICANN's recent governance papers, and outlines options for clarifying responsibilities for policy, funding and operational oversight of the root.

Why we are interested: Root governance outcomes directly affect the stability, security and resilience of the global DNS, of which .au is a part. auDA engages in these processes through the multi-stakeholder model; understanding proposed structures for the RSS helps inform our positions on operational integrity, transparency and the role of technical community institutions.

[Women in Highly Technical Occupations: The Leaky Pipeline](#) (Tech Council of Australia & Commonwealth Bank, September 2025)

What it's about: A national analysis of women's participation in highly technical roles such as software engineering, data and cyber security. The report identifies three "tipping points" where attrition is greatest: subject selection in early secondary school, entry into technical degrees and mid-career progression. It highlights gaps such as only 20 per cent of technical jobs being held by women and elevated mid-career exit rates for women. The report outlines targeted interventions, including school engagement, reskilling pathways and workplace inclusion standards.

Why we are interested: The pipeline findings directly inform auDA's capability-building and inclusion work. Through [auDA Membership](#) we encourage diverse participation across business, community and academia; we also work with universities and youth programmes to build foundational understanding of the internet, the DNS and .au (e.g., student events and workshops). Insights on entry pathways, reskilling and mid-career retention can shape our industry collaborations and public-benefit initiatives that support women's progression into software engineering and cyber security. This also aligns with our [Digital Lives Research 2025](#) insights on persistent gaps in digital skills and confidence, reinforcing the case for practical outreach and education that broaden the technical talent pipeline.

Stay up to date with our upcoming events and webinars

auDA hosts regular webinars on a range of topics, including public policy matters and debriefs of key internet governance events. [See our recent webinars and upcoming events schedule on the auDA website.](#)



Contact auDA's Policy team via public.policy@auda.org.au for more information on our policy and advocacy initiatives and other related matters.