

A secure .au



**Secure, reliable
and trusted**

January 2024

Who we are:

.au Domain Administration (auDA) is the administrator of the .au domain name system (DNS), which is Australian critical infrastructure relied on by millions of internet users in Australia and around the world. For more than 20 years, auDA has been endorsed by the Federal Government to administer the .au domain in the interests of all Australians.

We are a not-for-profit organisation and our purpose is to administer a trusted .au domain for the benefit of all Australians and champion an open, free, secure and global internet. We support the needs of Australian internet users by:

- Delivering a stable, secure and reliable .au
- Implementing .au policy rules that are transparent, responsive and efficient
- Investing in the Australian internet ecosystem to improve the utility of the .au domain.

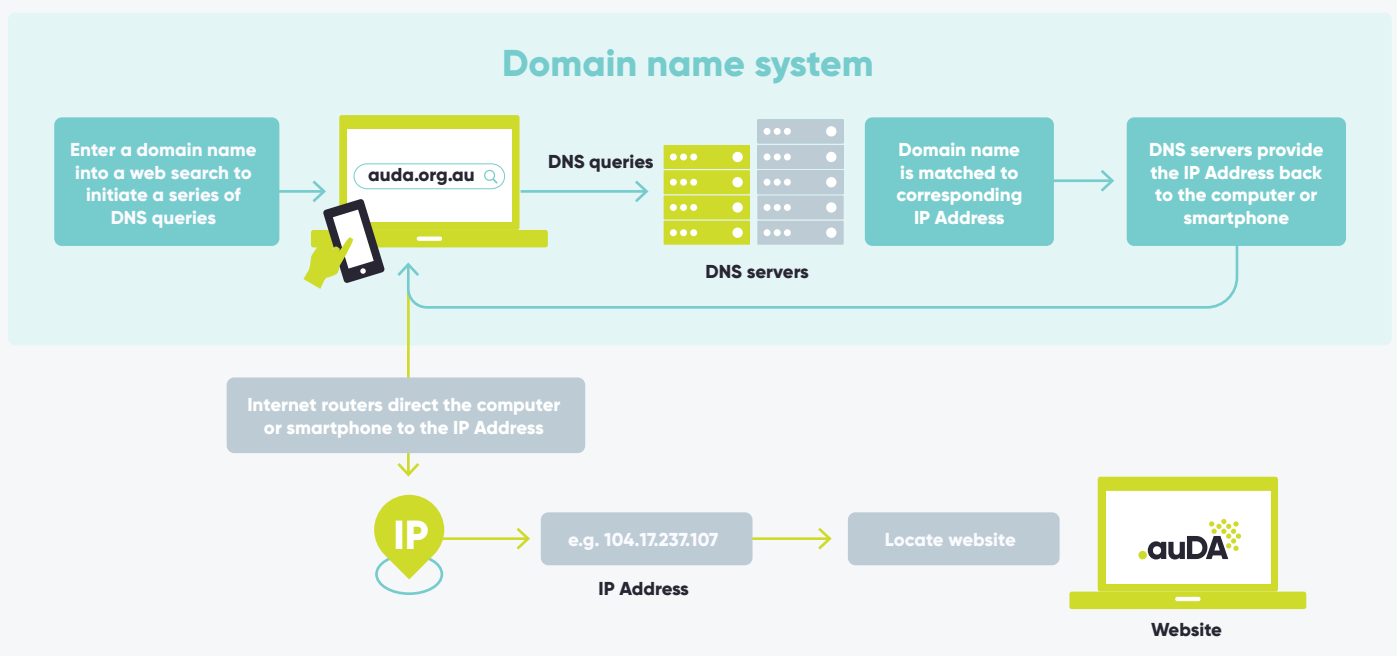
Through our steady stewardship of the .au domain, advocacy and active participation, we strive to uphold the multi-stakeholder model of internet governance and the social and economic benefits that flow from it.

To learn more about auDA or registering a .au domain name for your website or email address, visit www.auda.org.au

The DNS – used universally to navigate the internet

The DNS enables internet users to navigate the internet with ease.

Each time you visit a .au website or send an email to an address that ends in .au, you initiate a series of DNS queries to a network of DNS servers spread around the world to determine the network address (Internet Protocol (IP) Address) of your desired website or email destination.

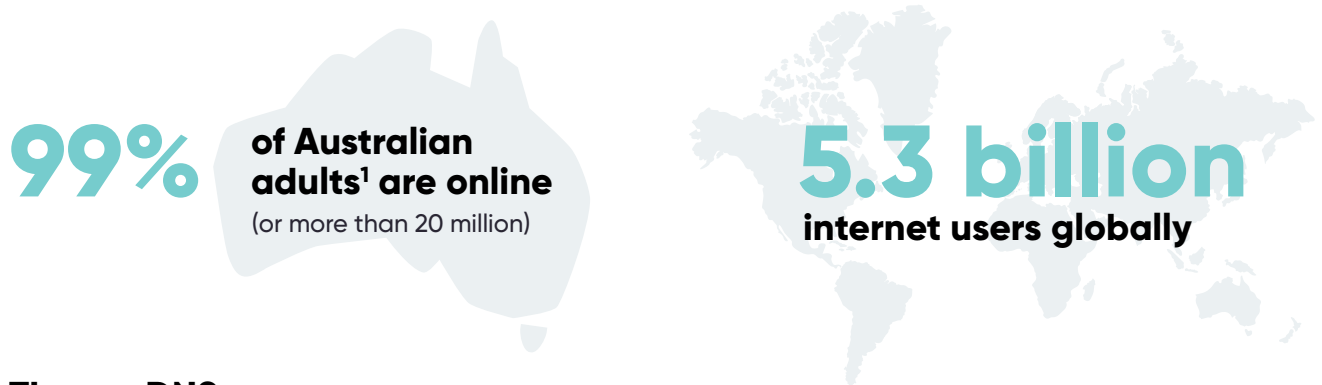


Without the DNS, navigating the internet would be a complicated and cumbersome process, requiring you to memorise long sets of numbers that make up the network address that identify where a website or email address is hosted online (IP addresses).

IP Addresses also often change for operational reasons, so even if you could remember the number, you would need to regularly check and update it.

Australia online: why DNS security is critical

The DNS underpins many services on the internet, therefore, is vital to the modern economy and delivery of digital services and communications. Australian legislation defines the .au DNS as Australian critical infrastructure as it is an essential internet service. Strong security is required to maintain the reliable, accurate, uninterrupted delivery of services and communications via the .au domain.



The .au DNS:



Supports local and international trade with Australian businesses



Enables users to search the internet, send emails, engage with friends and family on social media platforms



Provides access to essential online services: government, banking, telehealth, educational content and much more

In 2022–23, the .au DNS responded to an average:

4.6 billion DNS queries per day or 137.6 billion per month

30% of .au DNS queries originate in Australia



70% originate overseas



According to the Australian Signals Directorate (ASD), a cybercrime was reported every six minutes on average in 2022–23, compared to every seven minutes in the previous financial year.²

1. Percentage of Australian adults online from ACMA's [How we use the internet 2022 report](#), adults (18 years or older in 2023) from ABS data
2. ASD Cyber Threat Report 2022–23

How auDA keeps .au secure

auDA invests significantly in DNS security and works closely with .au registrars that offer .au domain name services to the public, and the .au registry operator, to maintain a stable, secure and reliable .au.

We maintain strong cyber defences through:

Best practice standards



- Maintain ISO 27001 certification, the global standard for information security
- Maintain ISO 22301 certification, the global standard for business continuity
- Adhere to the ASD Essential Eight model to prevent security incidents, limit damage and recover systems
- Maintain contractual agreements that ensure the .au registry operator and auDA accredited registrars adhere to relevant security standards
- Enable DNS Security Extensions (DNSSEC) to help ensure the authenticity of DNS information

Testing our defences



- Undertake regular evaluation and testing of security defences by specialist third parties
- Undertake regular crisis simulation, incident response, and business recovery exercises

Compliance with the Security of Critical Infrastructure Act 2018 (Cth)



- Maintain a critical Infrastructure Risk Management Program (CIRMP) to mitigate risks
- Undertake annual cyber attestation to Government on the effectiveness of our CIRMP
- Ensure proactive reporting of any security incidents to the Government as required

How we ensure compliance with .au rules

The .au domain is governed by robust Licensing Rules that guide who can register .au domain names. The rules support the use of .au domain names for legitimate purposes and limit the opportunity for .au domain names to be used to facilitate online harm.

- The .au Licensing Rules require people and entities that register .au domain names (registrants) to have an Australian presence – this ensures they are subject to Australian laws and regulations
- auDA supports compliance with the .au Licensing Rules through:



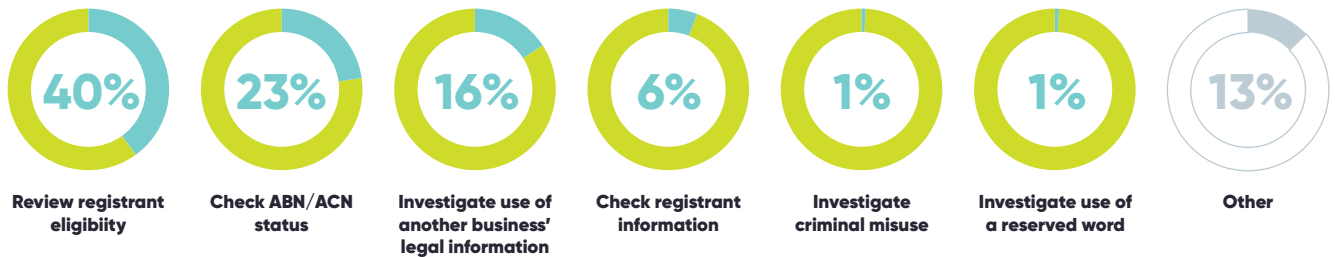
- Suspension and cancellation of .au licences that are misused
- A comprehensive compliance audit program to verify compliance with the rules
- Validation checks performed by .au registrars to ensure registrants are eligible to hold a .au domain name licence when they register, renew or transfer their licence.
- Robust complaint handling processes with several points of review available
- .au Dispute Resolution Policy (auDRP) to address competing legal rights to a .au domain name

.au audit program

Our audit program helps maintain the integrity of .au. In 2022-23:

10,400 compliance audits completed

Audit topic



Audit outcome



Requests from enforcement bodies

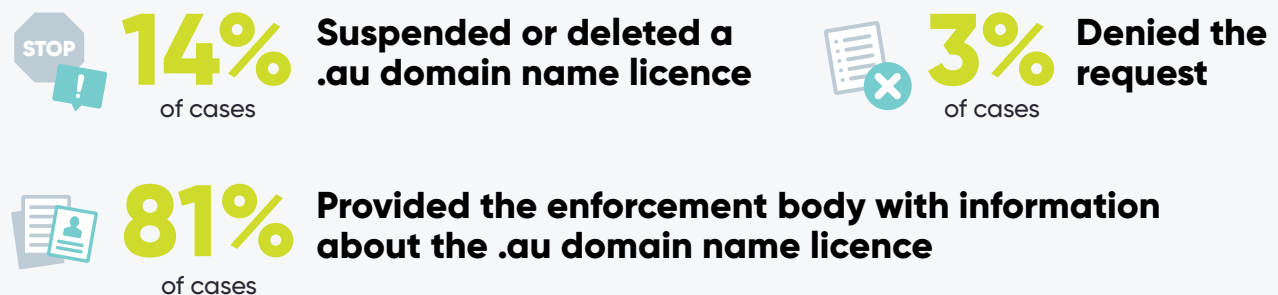
Where concerns about .au domain names are raised by enforcement bodies including the Australian Federal Police, state-based police forces, and consumer affairs bodies, we will cooperate and investigate in accordance with the .au rules.

In 2022-23:

59 .au domain names were subject to a request from an enforcement body (0.001%)



In response to enforcement body requests³ we:



³ Two per cent of cases were pending at the end of the financial year

More secure with .au

DNS abuse in .au is well below the global average. DNS abuse comprises five categories of online harm where domain names are used for malicious activity:



Botnets



Malware



Pharming



Phishing

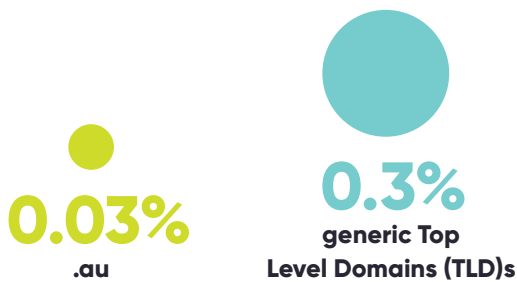


Spam⁴

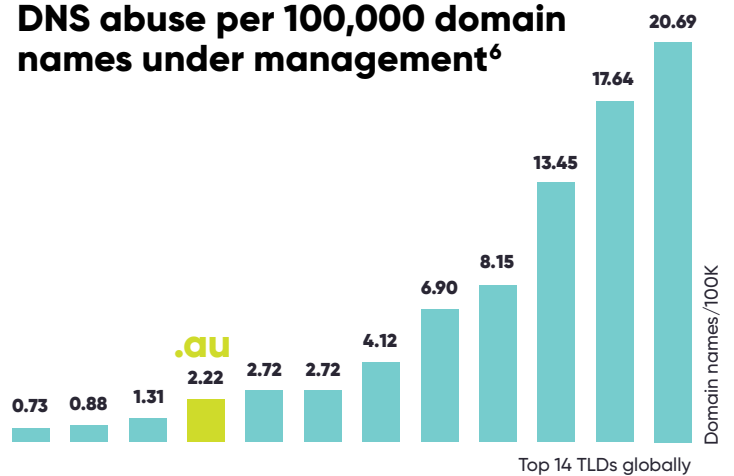
Almost all cases of DNS abuse in the .au domain are a result of hacked small business websites with compromised security.

DNS abuse in .au is low and auDA is committed to further reducing it through our DNS abuse audit program and by educating the public on website security.

.au has one of the lowest rates of DNS abuse in the world⁵



DNS abuse per 100,000 domain names under management⁶



In 2022-23
auDA completed
2,200
DNS abuse audits
+323% year on year

The DNS abuse audits identified

76% were associated with phishing
22% with malware
2% with other types of DNS abuse

DNS abuse audit outcomes

72% Domain name repaired
19% other
7% 30 day suspension
2% cancelled by auDA or registrant

We identify and rectify instances of DNS abuse in .au through:

- Daily monitoring of more than 45 threat feeds for .au registrations associated with DNS abuse
- Educating registrants on steps to rectify DNS abuse and increase website security
- Cooperation with international bodies including the DNS Abuse Institute on best practice identification and mitigation

For information on keeping your website secure from DNS abuse, read auDA's DNS abuse fact sheet.

Remember – if you see any suspicious activity related to a .au domain name, you can report it to auDA by submitting an enquiry on our website.

4. Where the spam facilitates one of the other four categories.

5. ICANN Domain Abuse Activity Reporting September 2023.

6. DNS Abuse Institute August 2023.

Data is sourced from auDA unless otherwise indicated. auDA data sources referenced in this report are:

- auDA compliance data, June 2023
- .au DNS nameserver data, June 2023

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