

.au Licensing Rules Review 2025 – overview of the issues

auDA is endorsed by the Australian Government to administer the .au for the benefit of all Australians. To ensure the rules for .au domain name licences continue to be effective and in line with community expectation, auDA has appointed an external Policy Advisory Panel to undertake a multi stakeholder review of the [.au Domain Administration Rules: Licensing \(.au Licensing Rules\)](#).

The Panel is seeking community feedback on the following key issues relating to the operation of the .au Licensing Rules:

Domain name monetisation

Domain name monetisation means registering a domain name licence for the sole purpose of selling, leasing or holding the domain name licence to generate revenue. It also includes warehousing and registering a domain name licence for the sole purpose of transferring the licence to another person.

- Monetisation is **not permitted** in the org.au, asn.au, id.au, edu.au and the State and Territory namespaces.
- Monetisation is **permitted** in the .au direct namespace and there has been no feedback that this should change.
- Monetisation is **permitted** in the com.au and net.au namespaces, but there are strong and divided views on whether this should continue. Some consider investing in domain names a legitimate practice, whereas some believe that it is not a legitimate practice in com.au or net.au and should be banned.

Allocation rules for com.au and net.au

Someone registering a com.au or net.au domain name licence must show, in addition to being a commercial entity, that the domain name matches their name, or the name of a service, goods, event, activity or premises that they operate. For example, the domain name matches their business name or Australian trade mark, or the name of a service they provide. This is a uniquely Australian rule that has been in place since the beginning of .au.

This issue is closely linked to the issue of monetisation, as many complaints involve domain names offering income-generating links to meet the allocation rules on the basis that they are providing a service to internet users, and that the name of the service matches the domain name. Some stakeholders support a stricter approach to allocation requirements, while others argue that the allocation requirements should be removed.

Contested .au direct domain names

In September 2022, auDA launched a new namespace called **.au direct** where a domain name can end in .au (e.g. forexample.au), and registrants with existing domain name licences in .au were given the chance to register their matching .au direct domain name. Where more than one registrant (e.g. forexample.com.au and forexample.gov.au) applied for the same .au direct domain name, it could not be allocated and became contested. There are currently over 3,000 contested .au direct domain names.

The current system relies on applicants negotiating with each other to resolve a contested .au direct domain name.

The Panel is seeking feedback on whether this is the best approach, or whether there is a better way to resolve contention amongst the applicants.

Bad faith and scam registrations

Some domain names are registered in bad faith, including deliberate misspellings to mislead consumers and enable scams. auDA can reserve such domain names to prevent registration but is required to publish a list of the names.

auDA has proposed to the Panel that the .au Licensing Rules be changed to allow high risk names to remain unpublished to avoid copycat scams.

Complaint processes

auDA has asked the Panel to consider whether the complaint processes set out in the .au Licensing Rules are clear and fair in relation to:

1. The process for addressing complaints about auDA initiated audits
2. Who can escalate an unresolved complaint for internal review and external review of the complaint.

Alignment of the .au Licensing Rules with global best practice

auDA, in consultation with the registry operator and registrars, has identified a number of .au domain name lifecycle rules that are out of step with global best practice. For example, in .au, a registrant cannot renew their domain name more than 90 days before it expires. Global best practice allows a registrant to renew their name at any time in the domain name lifecycle.

auDA has asked the Panel to consider these best practices as part of the review.

Further information about these issues

This document is designed to provide a brief overview of the issues. For more information about each of these issues please refer to the full [Issues Paper](#).

Raising a new issue

If you have any additional issues relating to the .au Licensing Rules, the Panel would like to hear your feedback.