.au Licensing Rules Review 2025
Summary of recommendations in the Final Report

The external Policy Advisory Panel (Panel), tasked with reviewing the .au Domain Administration Rules: Licensing (.au Licensing Rules), has produced a Final Report with recommendations for proposed changes to the .au Licensing Rules.
This document provides a brief overview of the recommendations in the Final Report.

This document provides an overview of the Final Report recommendations, which can be read in full on the auDA website.

Recommendation 1 – Monetisation of domain names

Recommendation: No change to the current approach that allows domain monetisation in the com.au, net.au and .au direct namespace.

Why: The Panel considers that on balance the current approach should not be substantially changed, as there is insufficient evidence that monetisation of a domain name inherently undermines trust and confidence in the com.au, net.au or .au direct namespaces.

Recommendation 2 – Allocation rules for com.au and net.au namespaces

Recommendation: The Panel recommends deleting subparagraph (f) from section 2.4.4 (2) of the .au Licensing Rules. Note a minority of the Panel did not support this recommendation and instead supported the retention of the status quo.

Note: Section 2.4.4(2) of the .au Licensing Rules is known as the allocation rules, and requires a connection between a registrant and their domain name. In broad terms, a registrant can demonstrate their connection to the domain name under 2.4.4(2) (a) to (e) by having a related company, business, statutory or personal name, or trademark. Under 2.4.4(2)(f) a registrant can demonstrate their connection through other avenues such as related service, goods, event, activity or premises.

Why: The majority took the view that removing subparagraph (f) would place applicants on a more consistent allocation footing while retaining the objective and verifiable pathways to compliance in subparagraphs (a) to (e). Clearer and more transparent allocation rules would support trust and confidence in com.au and net.au for the benefit of the Australian community.

The minority position opposed the removal of subparagraph (f) and instead supported retention of the current allocation rules.

Recommendation 3 – Contested .au direct domain names

> **Recommendation:** The Panel recommends continuation of the current process for the contested .au direct name allocation process.

Why: The Panel noted that each contested party already holds a domain name and has paid to remain in the contest under clearly stated rules; changing the rules now could be unfair. The Panel could not identify any class of applicant more deserving than another and therefore supports maintaining the current contested name process.

Recommendation 4 – Fraudulent and bad faith registrations and Reserved Names

> **Recommendation 4.1**: Remove the requirement under Rule 2.6.7 of the .au Licensing Rules for auDA to publish the reserved list.
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> **Recommendation 4.2:** auDA should publish the criteria based on which it decides to put a domain name in a reserved list, and release aggregate metrics, such as number of Reserved Names, number of reversals that are being or have been reviewed, and average time taken from detection to reservation over periods of time.

Why: The Panel noted that the submissions and consultation feedback supported the removal of the requirement to publish the Reserved Names list, and the Panel supported the removal and maintaining transparency by publishing information related to decision making processes for Reserved Names.

Recommendation 5 – complaint processes

> **Recommendation 5.1**: The Panel recommends that the complaints process in Part 3 of the .au Licensing Rules be amended to include audits performed by auDA.
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> **Recommendation 5.2**: The Panel recommends that the scope of the 'affected person' is broadened appropriate to Rules 3.6.1 and 3.8.1 of the .au Licensing Rules such that they can demonstrate an interest in the domain name adequately.
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> **Recommendation 5.3**: The Panel recommends increasing the time given to a person to file an application under Rule 3.6.3 of the .au Licensing Rules to 7 days from the current 48 hours.

Why: The Panel's view is that:

- Audits are an integral part of auDA's compliance activities and including them in Part 3 of the Licensing Rules, which deals with complaint processes, would improve accountability and trust in the audit process, protect registrants' rights and support the effectiveness of the audit framework.
- auDA's current broader interpretation of an 'affected person' should be better reflected in the Rules and the test should allow a person to demonstrate an adequate interest in the domain name while maintaining an effective and proportionate review process.
- The current 48-hour period for applying for a review of a decision to cancel a domain name is too short for many applicants and should be increased to seven days.

Recommendation 6 - Alignment of selected rules in .au with equivalent rules in generic top level domains (gTLDs) (such as .com)

Recommendation 6: The Panel recommends amending the following rules regarding the domain lifecycle:

a) Remove the 90-days renewal window within Rule 2.14.1 of the .au Licensing Rules and allow registrant to renew domain licences anytime during the lifetime of the domain until the expiration of the licence;

b) Increase the cooling-off period from 3 days to 5 days in relation to Rule 2.15.4 of the .au Licensing Rules;

c) Amend the redemption periods and apply a consistent deletion period with 30 days redemption period (to standardise along the lines of international best practices); and

d) increase the pending/hold period from 1 day to 5 days (time between the redemption and purging of the domain name).

Why: The Panel considers that alignment would benefit registrars operating across Australian and international namespaces by reducing different business processes. Registrants would also benefit from longer and more consistent periods to renew, reconsider, recover or act on a domain name licence.

Recommendation 7 – Including scams within the scope of the .au Licensing Rules

> **Recommendation 7**: The Panel recommends that the current approach to scams under the .au Licensing Rules be retained, and further, auDA should work with NASC to continually refine the approach to dealing with scams in the .au and publish processing guidance, scam referrals and outcomes.
>
> Acknowledging the fast-moving nature of scams particularly with the rapid development of AI technology, the Panel further recommends that this issue be included in the terms of reference for the next review of the .au Licensing Rules in three years' time.

Why: The Panel accepts the seriousness of scam harm and the need for auDA to contribute to whole-of-system prevention. Regulators, courts and enforcement bodies should remain responsible for determining scam conduct, while auDA continues to work with the National Anti-Scam Centre to refine referral and response processes.

Recommendation 8 – Adequate communication to registrants regarding renewals or cancellation of domain name licences

> **Recommendation 8**: The Panel recommends that the .au Licensing Rules should incorporate clear information about a registrar's obligation to contact a registrant in the case of suspension, cancellation or expiry of a domain name and there should be an uplift in the frequency and method of contact like sending multiple notices in plain language.

Why: Stakeholders reported losing domain names after renewal or cancellation notices were missed, and the .au Licensing Rules do not clearly state registrar notification obligations for expiry, suspension or cancellation of a domain name. The source of these complaints should be addressed through clear obligations in the .au Licensing Rules.

Recommendation 9 – exemption from eligibility rules to retain com.au after retirement

> **Recommendation 9:** The Panel recommends adoption of flexibility within the compliance posture to facilitate a registrant transition to another appropriate namespace once they have ended their commercial operations and they no longer meet the com.au eligibility.

The Panel also recommends that auDA distributes advisory/educational documents on how registrants can approach transitions in simple language.

Why: The Panel notes the identity of com.au as a trusted commercial space in Australia and rather than creating a non-commercial exception, auDA should use help affected registrants transition to another namespace for which they remain eligible.

Recommendation 10: Improving privacy in the WHOIS database

Recommendation 10: The Panel recommends that the .au Licensing Rules be amended to include information, along the lines of section 2.8.1 of the Registrar Rules, about how registrants can use role-based descriptions in the WHOIS to limit publication of personal information.

Why: The Panel considers that including the option of role-based descriptions in the .au Licensing Rules would help limit publication of personal information while preserving a way for identifying and contacting a registrant.