



auDA 2026-30 Strategy

June 2025



About auDA

.au Domain Administration Limited (auDA) is an Australian, not-for-profit, community-based organisation responsible for administering the .au domain.

It was established by the Australian Internet community in 1997, as the administrator of, and the Australian self-regulatory policy body for, the .au country-code Top Level Domain (ccTLD).

auDA has been endorsed by the Australian Government since 2001 to manage the .au domain for the benefit of all Australians. The Government sets out the basis for its endorsement in formal **Terms of Endorsement**, which outline auDA's core functions and principles and guide our work. We also operate under an agreement with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), the international body that coordinates the internet's naming and numbering systems.

The .au domain name system (DNS) is Australian critical communications infrastructure, designated under the *Security of Critical Infrastructure Act 2018 (Cth)* (SOCi). As the trusted administrator of the .au DNS, auDA supports more than four million .au domain names and facilitates internet users to connect to websites, email addresses and other internet resources that use a globally unique

identifier ending in .au. To ensure the integrity of .au, we have a robust security and compliance function and, have a cooperative relationship with Australian law enforcement bodies.

Any individual or organisation that has an Australian presence is eligible to register a domain name in .au, and is also eligible to become a member of auDA.

auDA is governed by the *Corporations Act 2001 (Cth)* and the auDA Constitution, which sets out our governance requirements as a not-for-profit, including the appointment and duties of our Board Directors, Nomination Committee, Advisory Committees and members.

To deliver our work in the interest of Australians we engage with the Australian public, our members, industry, government, civil society, and academia, and administer .au through multi-stakeholder processes that are inclusive, consensus-based, transparent, and accountable.

Introduction from auDA CEO Bruce Tonkin

auDA is the steward of Australia's .au ccTLD for the internet community. We are responsible for ensuring it delivers value for the community and is secure, reliable and trusted.



We are proud .au today supports millions of Australian businesses, government bodies, not-for-profits, educational institutions and individuals, and has grown to become the seventh largest ccTLD, and rank in the top 10 Top Level Domains (TLDs), globally. Maintaining .au as the trusted, number one choice for Australian internet users is front of mind as we develop our 2026–30 Strategy.

auDA's 2026–30 Strategy sets out our proposed strategic direction over the next five years, and is informed by a range of inputs and a thorough planning process. We commenced work in 2023–24 by undertaking an environment scan and considering the rapidly changing environment in which auDA operates and how this may

evolve over time. This work culminated in the delivery of our *Future Scenarios Project Report 2024*. We deeply considered the opportunities and challenges the scenarios present for auDA as a not-for-profit ccTLD manager and will continue to monitor them.

As a result of this work, our 2026–30 Strategy seeks to build and deepen local, regional and global relationships, further advance our security, invest in digital identity and mechanisms to improve trust in using the internet, and harness new technology such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and quantum computing, so that auDA can continue to respond to these evolving challenges.

Collaborating with our multi-stakeholder community is core to auDA's commitment to multi-stakeholder processes. Our Strategy has been shaped by community engagement and feedback including stakeholder and .au member surveys and community consultation on our strategy, which affirms community expectations of auDA. It is also informed by the Australian Government's 2025 Terms of Endorsement for auDA and leverages staff and Board expertise; all team members and Directors had the opportunity to share their vision of what auDA could achieve by 2030 and how we can meet this.

At its core, our Strategy outlines how auDA will continue to fulfil our core functions under our Terms of Endorsement while maintaining a strong operating position in a challenging environment, and by working with our multi-stakeholder community to innovate and respond to change.

auDA's story

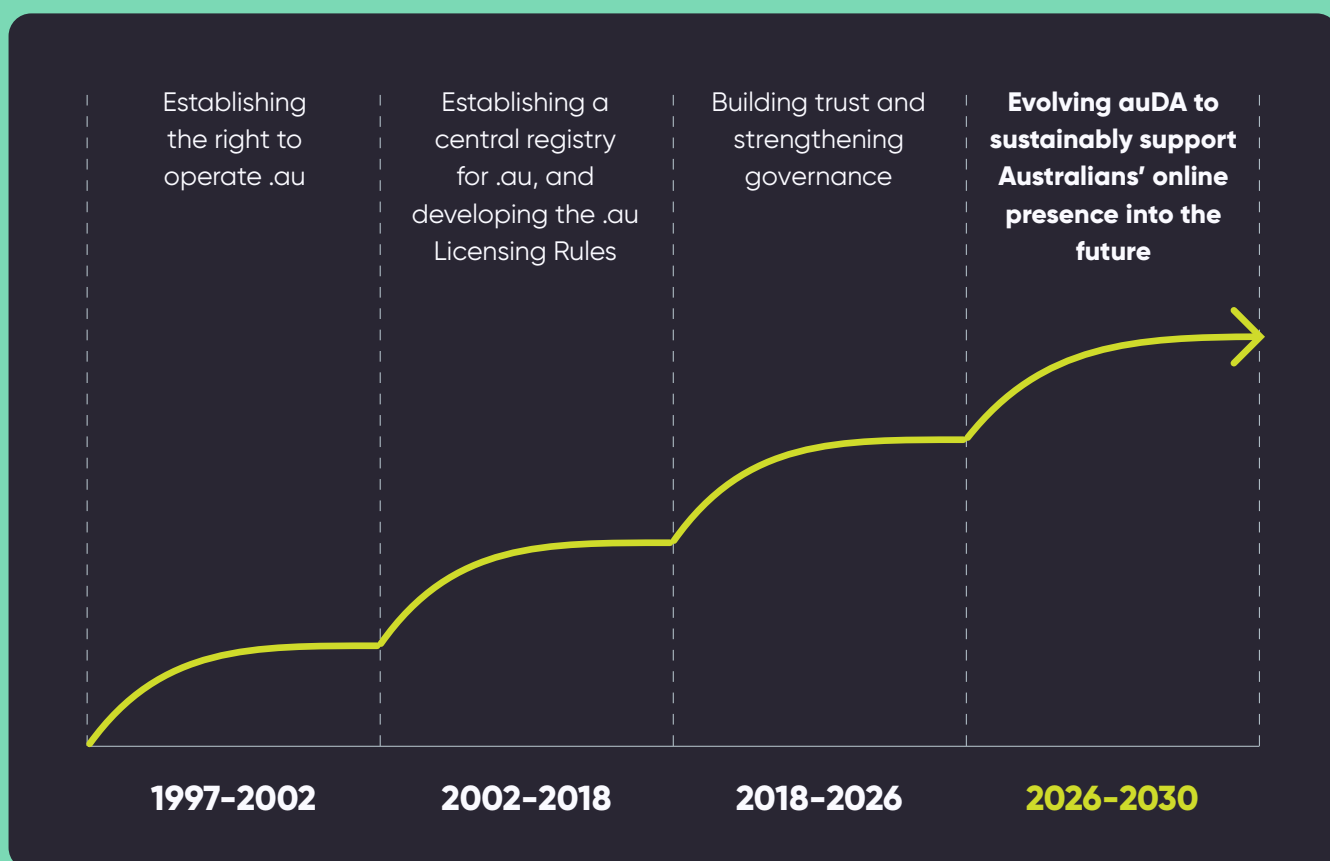
auDA was established in 1997 by the Australian internet community as the administrator of, and the Australian self-regulatory policy body, for the .au ccTLD.

In 2001, we were officially endorsed by the Australian Government to administer the .au ccTLD and received formal delegation for the administration of .au from ICANN.

Since that time, auDA has built consumer confidence in .au as a trusted choice for Australians online, supported significant growth in .au registrations, facilitating Australia's digital economy and social connection, and embedded robust corporate governance processes within the organisation to support our work.

As we look to 2026 and beyond, auDA faces a markedly different geopolitical environment, evolving technologies and a changing operating environment, which are set out in greater detail on page 8.

Against this backdrop, we seek to embed sustainable business operations so we can continue to deliver social and economic benefits for Australians through the use of .au domain names. Our 2026–30 Strategy is designed to guide us through this evolution.



auDA 2026–30 Strategy on a page

Purpose

Connecting Australians to an open internet with trust and confidence.

Vision

.au is the primary online identity for Australian individuals and organisations, supported by a nimble and resilient auDA.

Strategic Pillars

Trust

Strengthen Australians' trust in .au and auDA, and grow Australians' engagement in the digital economy and society.

Capability

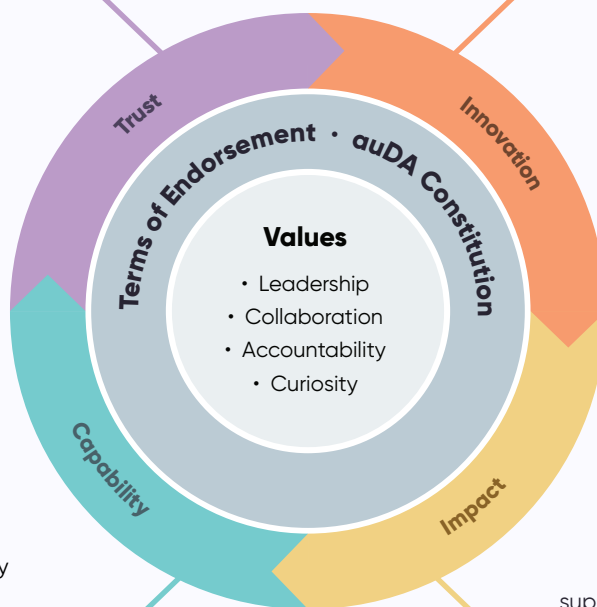
Grow auDA's leadership and technical skills so that it is nimble and resilient and can confidently meet the challenges of a technically and geopolitically dynamic environment.

Innovation

Utilise new technologies and new approaches to ensure the financial sustainability of auDA as a self-funded not-for-profit organisation, and improve the utility of .au

Impact

Invest in strengthening multi-stakeholder internet governance, and developing new internet governance and DNS experts. Support R&D, and support under-served communities to establish an online presence.



July 2026 update: The auDA Board approved an updated purpose statement following public consultation. Text in the Impact pillar description was corrected.

2026–30 Strategy development

auDA is the trusted administrator of the .au domain – a role we carry out on behalf of the Australian community. To continue supporting Australians into the future, we have undertaken a thorough strategic planning process, considered our operating environment, future challenges and opportunities, and determined our proposed areas of strategic focus for 2026–30.

The auDA Board participated in the process for developing the Strategy and sought feedback from auDA's multi-stakeholder community on the strategy prior to its finalisation.

Process

auDA used design thinking methodology to develop the strategy. This involved considering our future operating environment and the challenges and opportunities ahead, and exploring or "discovering" them through workshops, "defining" them in greater detail with staff and the Board, before framing or "developing" the areas of strategic focus for auDA.

We then used systematic thinking to develop ideas to solve challenges and optimise opportunities that we face. The aim with this process was to develop a strong vision for auDA's future and determine key results by which to meet that vision. The key results will be delivered through implementation of strategic projects. The output of this work is presented here in our strategy. The strategy will be further supported by an annual operating plan.

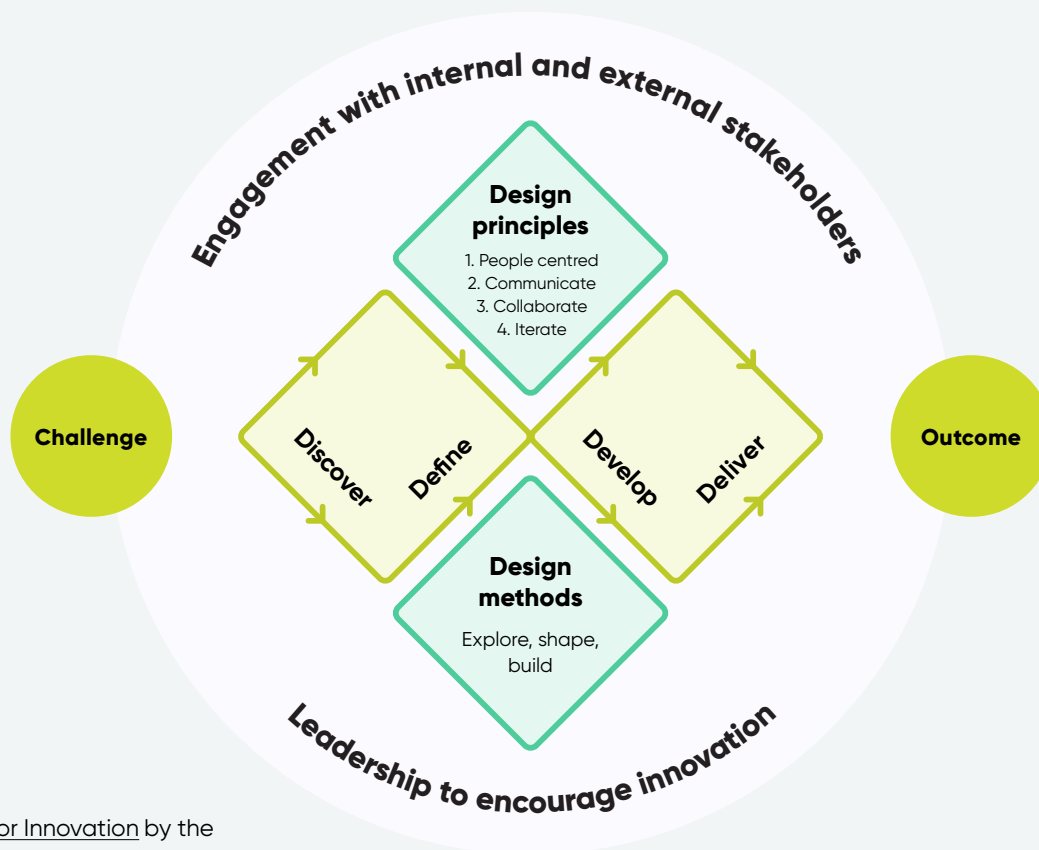
Staff and Board workshops

Over 2024–25, auDA staff and Board Directors participated in a range of strategic planning activities and workshops based on design thinking principles, to identify and refine areas of strategic focus for auDA over the next five years.

In addition to the Future Scenarios Report, inputs included consideration of:

- Technology and market developments
- auDA's enterprise risks
- Feedback from our 2025 stakeholder survey and 2024 .au member survey and input from our advisory committees
- Feedback from auDA's Materiality Survey which identified what matters are most material to our stakeholders (you can learn more about our material themes in our [2023–24 Annual Report](#))
- [auDA's Terms of Endorsement](#) from the Australian Government, reviewed in 2025
- Public consultation on the Draft 2026–30 Strategy.

Through this process, auDA staff and Directors iterated strategic opportunities and areas of focus for auDA over 2026–30. The Strategy presents the outcomes of this work.



Framework for Innovation by the Design Council under CC BY 4.0, adapted from the original.

Future Scenarios

auDA recognises that we operate in a complex geopolitical environment subject to rapid change and innovation. To support our strategic planning, we commenced our strategy development in 2023 with a long-term foresight project that explored the communications and technology environment in 2044 with three contrasting scenarios: State of Alert, Ecological Civilisation, and The Price is Right. These scenarios consider issues that will impact auDA's operating environment between 2024 and 2044 including geopolitics, use of technology, security and trade, and environmental impacts. The scenarios were developed over several months with input from our multi-stakeholder community, our standing Advisory Committees, and local and global experts.

The scenarios enabled us to anticipate future complexity and consider how auDA and .au can continue to deliver value for Australians into the future, in what will undoubtedly be a vastly different environment to that which we operate in now. In the 12-months since the scenarios were published, we already see elements from them in play, such as a greater focus on national security, and increased influence by large technology companies on national and global governance.

You can learn more about the scenarios and how we developed them in auDA's [Future Scenarios Project Report 2024](#).

Strategic environment

Trust

.au domain names are the preferred choice among Australian consumers and small businesses, and .au is the seventh largest ccTLD in the world. auDA research identifies high levels of consumer trust in .au year-on-year. Our most recent [Why .au?](#) research report indicates half of Australian consumers will only purchase from a business online if it has a website ending in .au.

This trust is supported by robust .au Licensing Rules that ensure .au registrants (domain name holders) have a connection to Australia, a comprehensive compliance framework, and complaints and disputes processes that are transparent, fair and accessible. In 2025, auDA will appoint a Policy Advisory Panel to conduct a review of the .au Licensing Rules, which will include extensive community consultation.

Demand

While auDA research indicates a majority of small businesses use a .au domain name and Australian consumers prefer to buy from .au namespaces, global long term averages show domain name registrations slowing. Registrations have been impacted by competition from social media accounts, online marketplaces and emerging technologies such as AI, each of which impact the visibility of domain names when users search for information on the internet. auDA's [Digital Lives of Australians 2024](#) Report indicates younger generations of Australians in particular use the internet in ways that mean domain names are less visible to them.

Demand for new .au domain names also flattened in the 2023-24 financial year. This follows several years of strong growth driven by the introduction of .au direct in March 2022. The .au namespace growth currently aligns to global trends, with stable registrations year-on-year.

As auDA considers the slowing demand for domain names, we recognise the need to explore new products and services that align with our purpose, address the changing ways people use the internet, and continue to raise awareness of the benefits of .au. This will support our long-term sustainability as a fully self-funding, not-for-profit organisation and the administrator of the .au domain, in accordance with our Terms of Endorsement.

Security

.au has significantly lower levels of DNS abuse compared to global averages and auDA operates a reliable, secure .au DNS with 100 per cent availability.

The .au DNS is defined as *critical DNS* infrastructure within the critical communications sector under the SOCI Act. We promote strong cyber security through our commitment to best practice security standards, delivering our legal and regulatory requirements, working collaboratively with law enforcement bodies such as the Australian Federal Police (AFP), the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's (ACCC) National Anti-Scam Centre, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) and others, and maintaining a culture of continuous improvement.

Our operations

How we work and the tools we use to complete our work are undergoing a period of change. The take up of AI within workplaces globally and development of new AI tools continues at a rapid pace. auDA is committed to using AI where relevant to improve our operations in a secure, transparent and risk-controlled manner. auDA observes [Australia's AI Ethics Principles](#) and will ensure our use of AI will be for beneficial outcomes, will uphold privacy rights and data protections, and human oversight of AI systems will be enabled.

Our staff are an essential part of auDA's ability to deliver strategic outcomes and our ways of working and capabilities are vital to this in the rapidly changing environment in which we operate. Professionals with expertise in emerging technology and cyber security are in high demand. As our operating environment develops and changes, recruiting, training, supporting and retaining skilled staff in the right roles will be an important focus.

Within this changing landscape, auDA must also ensure our governance model remains fit for purpose and maintains the transparency and rigour required by our unique position as custodian of the .au DNS.

Internet governance locally, regionally and globally

auDA actively advocates for, and is committed to, the practice of the multi-stakeholder model of internet governance that is inclusive, consensus-based, transparent and accountable. The multi-stakeholder approach balances the needs and views of the community, civil society, industry, the technical community, academia and governments.

Internet governance has also become an increasingly contested space, as governments and non-government stakeholders navigate a shifting governance landscape. There are mounting efforts to move internet governance away from existing multi-stakeholder forums into multilateral forums, and to increase the influence governments have over the management of internet resources. Digital and cyber policy – including combatting cybercrime, regulating harms, promoting online safety and maximising the benefits of the digital economy – are central to the national interest of many nation states. This has led governments to increasingly prioritise control over digital resources.

We are a founding member of the global [Technical Community Coalition for Multistakeholderism \(TCCM\)](#), which comprises members from the internet naming and numbering community, and through which we work to strengthen multi-stakeholder decision making, including providing input into the recent Global Digital Compact and the World Summit on the Information Society 20year review (WSIS+20). The TCCM aims to ensure those who manage the internet's naming and numbering operations are involved in discussions, deliberations and decisions about the internet's future and its governance.

auDA actively participates in and sponsors a range of multi-stakeholder forums including ICANN, the Asia Pacific Top Level Domain Association (APTLD), and Internet Governance Forums (IGFs) globally, regionally and nationally. We are committed to engaging with and diversifying our communities at all levels to collectively support an open, free, secure and interoperable internet.

Strengths

- Reliable and secure operation of the .au DNS
- High community trust in .au domain names
- World-leading approach to tackling DNS abuse
- Transparent .au Licensing Rules, developed through multistakeholder processes
- Robust corporate governance
- Best practice cyber security and network resilience
- Regular engagement with the federal government, ICANN, .au members and our multistakeholder community
- More than 5,700 .au members, with considerable growth in diversity
- Robust registrant data quality and identity validation processes
- Strong relationships and active participation in the multi-stakeholder internet governance community
- Commitment to driving positive public impact through auDA's Public Benefit Program and internet governance and public policy activities
- Motivated, expert staff and Board Directors.

Challenges

- Geopolitical instability and differences could lead to a splintered internet with different technical and content-related rules, and reduced interoperability
- High cyber threat environment and increased sophistication of cyber attacks with the use of AI
- AI and other emerging technologies increasing the digital divide and impacting digital inclusion
- Emerging technologies and growth of online platforms and marketplaces, impacting the demand for domain names
- Flattening demand for domain names – impacted by people, particularly younger generations, searching the internet in different ways and the drop in visibility of domain names in common internet applications
- Inflationary pressures, increased regulatory obligations and security requirements put upward pressure on cost base
- Low awareness of the internet ecosystem and domain names, including amongst public policy decision makers
- Potential growth in development and use of alternate addressing systems such as blockchain domains
- Increasing regulatory requirements, including in areas of cyber security and data management
- Digital skills gap, coupled with entrenched perceptions such as the difficulty of developing a website
- Decreasing trust in using the internet due to increased threats from online scams
- Recruiting, training and retaining skilled, future-ready staff in a competitive operating landscape.

Opportunities

- Invest in innovation and product development to support sustainable revenues
- Further enhance trust and security throughout the .au ecosystem
- Broaden our impact in our local, regional and global communities in service of our purpose and encourage the use of common internet standards and common approaches to reduce DNS Abuse
- Invest in education and awareness related to domain names, the internet ecosystem and internet governance
- Take a leading role in multi-stakeholder internet governance locally, regionally and globally to contribute to improved policy and strengthened multi-stakeholder decision making
- Consider how we work with others to raise awareness of the internet ecosystem, the importance of cybersecurity and raise the integrity of the online environment
- Develop our workforce and add new capabilities to take advantage of new technologies and ways of working
- Support disadvantaged communities and address digital inclusion and online safety, and bring the benefits of the internet to all Australians through our Public Benefit Program
- Provide infrastructure and governance support to our regional neighbours to create a strong regional technical community and ensure stability of regional infrastructure.

auDA's 2026–30 Strategy

Our purpose

Connecting Australians to an open internet with trust and confidence.

Our values

auDA's work is aligned through a shared purpose, vision and values.

Our values guide the way in which we work together and work within our multi-stakeholder community.

We value:

Leadership

We are committed to communicating openly, and adding value to our multi-stakeholder community, locally, regionally and globally

Collaboration

We work together as one auDA in the service of Australian, regional and global internet users

Accountability

We honour our commitments, are responsible for our decisions, actions and performance, and deliver excellence

Curiosity

We seek to grow our knowledge, including of emerging practices, be adaptive and improve our understanding of our stakeholders and their viewpoints.

Our vision

.au is the primary online identity for Australian individuals and organisations, supported by a nimble and resilient auDA.

Core functions

- Ensure stable, secure and reliable operation of the .au domain, as part of Australia's suite of critical infrastructure
- Administer a licensing regime for .au domain names based in multi-stakeholder processes that is transparent, responsive, accountable, accessible and efficient
- Actively advocate for, participate in, and support multi-stakeholder internet governance processes domestically, regionally and internationally.

Our Objectives & Key Results (OKRs) and related projects

Our vision will be fulfilled through the successful completion of strategic projects to achieve our Objectives and Key Results (OKRs).

OKRs are a goal management framework. The OKRs outline what we seek to achieve (Objectives) and the outcomes by which we will track progress (Key Results). Strategic projects have been identified which will support auDA to achieve the Key Results. The details of these projects will be refined in internal operating plans developed each year over the lifetime of the strategy, with projects to be delivered in phases across the five year strategy horizon.

The following section provides an illustrative set of strategic projects which will inform the development of annual operating plans.

July 2026 update: The auDA Board approved an updated purpose statement following public consultation.

Our OKRs and related projects

Trust

Objective

Strengthen Australians' trust in .au and auDA, and grow Australians' engagement in the digital economy and society.

Key Results

Over the five-year strategy we aim to achieve the following key results:

- Raise the trust and integrity of .au domain names
- Successful implementation of the Australian Government's Information Security Manual (ISM) controls
- Diversify membership and grow member engagement.

Strategic Projects

- Automated validation of domain name registration data to assess registrations
- Data insights platform to optimise integrity of domain name registrations
- Lift security to implement all relevant controls in the Australian Government's ISM, and implement Zero Trust Maturity Model within auDA
- Research public trust in the internet environment, and utilise findings to enhance trust through auDA service delivery, advocacy and action by auDA and others
- Continue to increase the diversity of members and innovate the member program to leverage the membership base to better support the development of .au policies and policy approaches.

Innovation

Objective

Utilise new technologies and new approaches to ensure the financial sustainability of auDA as a self-funded, not-for-profit organisation, and improve the utility of .au.

Key Results

Over the five-year strategy we aim to achieve the following key results:

- Ensure auDA is financially sustainable
- Improve organisational productivity

Strategic Projects

- Explore and develop privacy protections for those who register domain names with their personal name and email address
- Explore and develop an online identity service, linked to a .au domain name, compliant with the Australian Government's digital ID system
- Utilise AI technologies to improve the integrity of .au domain names and ensure that auDA continues to meet community expectations
- Grow awareness of the benefits of .au, increase .au domain name take up and use amongst small businesses, and develop new resources for small businesses
- Improve productivity through process redesign, automation of manual tasks, and new ways of working.

Impact

Objective

Positively impact our ecosystem. Invest in strengthening multi-stakeholder internet governance, and developing new internet governance and DNS experts. We will also support research & development in areas of strategic focus and support under-served communities to establish an online presence.

Key Results

Over the five-year strategy we aim to achieve the following key results:

- Drive a growing cohort of Australians skilled & participating in internet governance and DNS
- Regional ccTLDs are enabled to run a resilient DNS anycast network with DNSSEC enabled, and registry database backup
- Communities challenged by digital inclusion, and concerns about online safety are supported to participate in the digital economy and society through use of .au domain names
- Support innovative research on auDA's strategic priorities
- Achieve net zero carbon emissions in the operation of .au as part of auDA's commitment to be environmentally and socially responsible.

Strategic Projects

- Develop the Asia Pacific Internet Governance Academy (APIGA) Australia, and embed internet governance into university curriculums
- Train university students and early-stage professionals in the DNS ecosystem (and associated technologies such as DNSSEC and DMARC), and embed DNS skills into university curriculums
- Establish a fellowship program that increases Australian participation in regional and global internet governance and DNS forums
- Use multi-stakeholder approaches to build the integrity of domain names, and review the competition model for the .au domain
- Support regional ccTLDs to build resilience through technical and policy capacity building
- Support communities in Australia with digital inclusion challenges to engage with emerging technology and utilise .au as their digital identity to create value
- Build the TCCM's capacity, influence and diversity so it can better strengthen multi-stakeholder internet governance and decision-making processes
- Track carbon emissions and adopt approaches that provide a local environmental and social benefit.

Capability

Objective

Grow auDA's leadership and technical skills so that it is nimble and resilient and can confidently meet the challenges of a technically and geopolitically dynamic environment.

Key Results

Over the five-year strategy we aim to achieve the following key results:

- Leadership Team members have completed a leadership training program
- AI is integrated into the business, enabling greater business productivity

- Staff rate auDA as a great place to work, as measured through an annual staff engagement survey
- Stakeholders consider auDA is a trusted and effective organisation.

Strategic Projects

- Develop an auDA-specific leadership training program to support leadership capability and career development and a program for staff to map and meet professional development goals
- Develop a culture of skills development and innovation across all areas of operation
- Develop a holistic operating model that leverages new technology and aligns capabilities and services with strategic objectives.

Glossary

.au member

.au members are members of auDA as set out in the auDA Constitution. They are critical stakeholders who enhance auDA's understanding of Australians' online needs and provide input to auDA policies and strategy. Members support the independent administration of the .au domain and have access to a range of benefits including events, insights and partner offers.

Country code Top Level Domain (ccTLD)

A two-character top level domain (TLD) reserved for a specific country listed in the ISO 3166 standard (e.g. .au).

Domain name

A human-readable internet address that allows internet users to find websites and send emails without having to remember complex Internet Protocol (IP) addresses.

Domain name licence

When you register a domain name you do not 'own' it, instead you are granted permission to use the domain name for specific period of time via a licence. The domain name holder (registrant) can choose to renew the licence before its expiry date or let it lapse, making the domain name available to be registered by other eligible parties.

Domain name system (DNS)

A critical service that operates over the internet enabling computers to find and connect to websites and email addresses by mapping domain names to their corresponding IP addresses. The .au DNS is defined as a critical domain name system, as part of critical communications infrastructure under Federal legislation.

DNS abuse

Malicious behaviour that uses the DNS and domain names to conduct online harm. DNS abuse is classified into five categories; malware (such as ransomware), botnets, phishing, pharming and spam (where it facilitates one of the other four categories of DNS abuse).

Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)

The organisation responsible for coordinating the internet's number and naming systems to help ensure a stable, secure and unified global internet.

Multi-stakeholder community

auDA's multi-stakeholder community is the network of key stakeholders that auDA regularly interacts with including the .au registry operator, registrars, resellers, registrants, local, state, and federal government entities, civil society, academia, industry bodies, technical community and .au members.

Multi-stakeholder internet governance

The rules, policies, standards and practices that coordinate and shape global cyberspace, which operate largely by consensus, with ideas and proposals debated on their merits. This leads to outcomes that have considered a full range of perspectives and have broad support. Representatives from governments, industry, the technical community, civil society and academia all participate on an equal footing.

Namespace

Domain name extensions (or different types of .au domain names) including .au direct, com.au, net.au, org.au etc.

Open, free, secure and interoperable internet

An open, free, secure and interoperable internet is an internet that works across borders, is accessible to all without undue restrictions, and is safe, reliable and resilient.

Registrant

The individual or organisation who holds a domain name licence. Registrants do not own a domain name. They hold a licence that allows them to use the registered domain name for the duration of the licence period.



Registrar

Companies that offer domain name services to the public, including registering, maintaining and renewing .au domain name licences. auDA accredited .au registrars are accredited by auDA to offer .au domain name registration services. They have direct access to the .au registry database.

Registry database

A database of all licensed .au domain names and associated information, such as the name and contact details of the registrant and registrar. Selected registry data is publicly available via the WHOIS tool, which allows people to find information about a domain name licence.

Registry operator

The .au registry operator is a third-party contracted by auDA to deliver registry services and support the reliable operation of the .au domain. Identity Digital Australia (formerly known as Afilias Australia) was appointed as the .au registry operator following a global tender process in 2017 and reappointed following a subsequent global tender process in 2023.

Security of Critical Infrastructure Act 2018 (Cth)

The *Security of Critical Infrastructure Act 2018* (Cth), often referred to as the SOCI Act, is Federal legislation that outlines the legal obligations for operators of critical infrastructure assets. The .au DNS is defined as Australian critical infrastructure under the Act.

Technical Community Coalition for Multistakeholderism (TCCM)

The TCCM comprises global members from the internet's naming and numbering community who work together to operate the critical infrastructure and services that sit at the heart of the internet and advocate for a stronger technical voice in internet governance.

Terms of Endorsement

auDA's Terms of Endorsement from the Federal Government outline the Government's formal endorsement of auDA. auDA must operate .au for the benefit of all Australians in accordance with the Terms for ongoing endorsement.

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