



*Qualitative exploration
Phase I*

*Perceptions of implementation policy
for open domain name registrations*

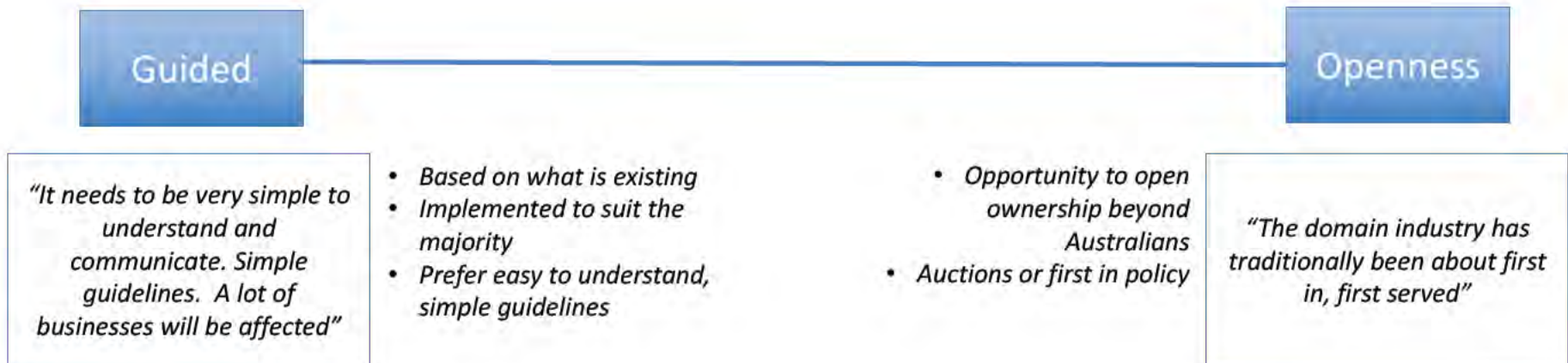
Executive Summary
.AU Domain Administration

March 2017

Two key dimensions driving stakeholder perceptions and opinions

We identified two key factors driving stakeholder perceptions and opinions – with direct registration providing opportunity for greater openness vs a need for continued guidance and protection. These factors were partly based on commercial interests, personal perceptions around the benefits of open policy and the perceived issues with NZ and UK assessments.

Ultimately ongoing policy is likely to take options from both.



Eligibility is the key policy dimension that most want to understand first

Eligibility is **absolutely** the key concern most stakeholders have with two main elements for consideration

1. Eligibility overall to purchase an .AU domain name among new owners
2. First right refusal to the new .AU domain name among existing owners (key)

Most stakeholders assumed that the eligibility criteria for an .AU domain name will remain fairly consistent with current policy – for instance open to Australian citizens/ businesses – allowing some level of protection of the .AU brand. This was perceived to offer reassurance to the Australian public that any .AU domain name would have some level of Australian interest.

“It should be under Australian rules, Australian quality control. Preserve the value of it” - Member

Most then assume it would be opened to any individual or organisation rather than existing predefined options (ABN/ACN for .com.au etc.) ultimately providing choice for domain owners in how they wish to brand their organisation or themselves.

Remaining domain owners should have some level of 'right to refusal'

Most believe that the remaining existing .AU domain names should have some right of refusal to the .AU name equivalent.

This issue of eligibility is a key area of concern but the majority of stakeholders were leaning towards majority rules - with .com.au having first right of refusal to the new .AU domain. The main reasons for this were:

- Represent the majority of domain owners (90%) so keeps the majority of stakeholders happier
- Easier to manage and easier to communicate – simplicity
- Overseas precedent (UK)

Beyond this, there were two alternative views

1. Next level in size such as .com.au and then org.au (if not closed)
2. OR back dating (i.e. whoever was first to register and have a continued licence)

Timeframes are the second most crucial element of policy

Timeframes were the second area of concern for most stakeholders with three considerations.

Ultimately the weigh up of these elements of the implementation policy are about giving Australians time to consider their options and make choices, whilst ensuring the industry remains buoyant.

1. Length of time before the new policy takes affect
2. Length of time for owners to decide on whether they wish to register the .AU equivalent before it is offered on the open market (key)
3. Length of time for the new .AU domain name licence period

Most keen not to slow the industry down

Most stakeholders agreed that within 6 months to 1 year the industry and public should be well equipped to move forward assuming there has been time for policy consultation and a lead up communications campaign (very important).

When considering the actual time existing domain owners should have to take up the equivalent .AU domain name, many stakeholders referenced the UK implementation process which is still in the midst of a 5 year take up process. Most believed that this process was too long and had consequently lost momentum – affecting the impact of the changes on the industry and public engagement levels. Generally most believed that...

- < 6 months was possibly not long enough for everyone to be communicated with, for businesses to make decisions and may put cost pressure on some
- 1 year - sweet spot for most
- > 1 year – changes lose momentum and individuals and business lack a sense of urgency to make a decision.

“It is like Goldie Locks – not too hot or too cold. Not too long, but not too short either” - Registrar

While continuing to educate the importance of the change within the industry and more broadly

Most stakeholders observed that the change to open registration is not necessarily a consumer lead change, but rather a governing body one, which means that for the majority there is a lack of awareness of these changes taking place or an inherent need for it. They also acknowledged that there are various levels of engagement within the industry let alone more broadly across Australian domain owners, with many Australians not understanding the importance of their domain name in their brand identity and image.

The combination of these things means that a strong and clear education campaign is going to be the **key to the success of the open registration policy**

The education campaign is likely to focus more on the HOW-TO for existing and new domain owners – including the process for implementation, eligibility and the timeframes but also the WHY open registration is being implemented and the WHO is responsible for guiding the implementation process will still be important to consider.

Moving forward, stakeholders identified a number of key communication channels across technology, government and commerce (mainly online) portals as well as social media and mainstream channels as well as registers directly.

Appendix

Research Context

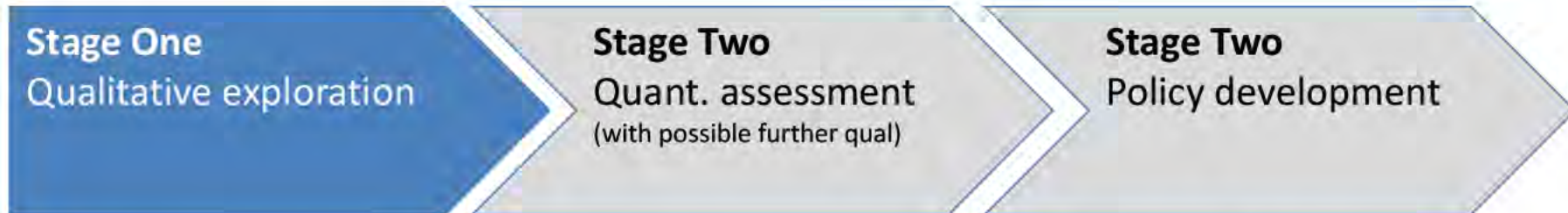
The .AU Domain Administration (auDA) is a self regulatory, non-profit company that currently manages the 2LD .AU domain space in Australia, under which exists both open (e.g. com.au, org.au) and closed (e.g. edu.au, gov.au) domains.

Up until now all .AU domain names have had to be registered under a second level domain – for example, yourname.com.au OR yourname.org.au and so on. In 2015 the Board of auDA made the decision to open up registration, allowing users to register a domain name directly under .AU – for example, yourname.AU.

In order to assist auDA in developing the best implementation policy for open domain registration, a three staged process involving qualitative and quantitative research as well as advisor panel development was proposed.

The first stage of this process involved qualitative exploration of the potential parameters of the new implementation policy and communication channels via in-depth phone interviews with engaged industry stakeholder groups. This report details the findings from this first stage.

Project approach



- 22 in-depth phone interviews. Average length 40 minutes
- Key engaged stakeholders
- Across Domainers, Registrars and Members

Purpose was to explore policy implementation must haves vs nice to haves and communication channels

Conducted Feb 2017

- TBC
- Proposed 5,000 domain owners across .com.au, .org.au, .id.au, .net.au, .gov.au, .edu.au
- 1,000 General Public responses

Perceptions of key elements of open registration policy document measured

Proposed May 2017

- auDA policy development including
 - Draft Policy
 - Make public for comment and review
 - Advisor Panel Review of draft Policy
 - Follow up review by Policy Review Panel – to be convened
 - Reviewed policy presented to Board

Proposed June 2017 onwards

Sample profile

22 in-depth phone interviews across Domainers, Registrars and Members (as invited by auDA) as part of Stage One.

The sample definitions were arbitrary as many had multiple roles across different organisations (Domainer and Member, Registrar and previous Board Member etc.)

Overall the respondents were all courteous and positive, with most pleased to be engaged in the process. Interviews were initially proposed to be 20-30 minutes but most were longer – average was around 40 minutes, reflecting the level of involvement and passion many have with the changes in policy direction.

Domainers	Registrars	Members
5	6	11

Report considerations

Stage One of this project was qualitative in nature so the findings are indicative only and are not necessarily representative of the total population.

In addition, the sample of respondents was drawn from a list of engaged and interested stakeholders who had indicated they would like to be involved in the first stage of policy development.

The research was focused on understanding how to best implement the policy as opposed to the decision making process behind open registration.