

# auDA 2021-25 STRATEGY

September 2021



# About auDA

.au Domain Administration Limited (auDA) is a not-for-profit organisation established by the Australian Internet community in 1997. It works with a range of stakeholders including industry, government and the Australian and international community, to develop and administer the rules for the .au country code Top Level Domain (ccTLD).

The .au domain name system (DNS) is part of Australia's critical infrastructure, and auDA has been endorsed by the Federal Government to administer it in the public interest and ensure it is a safe, accessible and trusted Australian asset for all Internet users.

auDA represents the .au interests locally and internationally and operates under an agreement with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), the international body responsible for coordinating the Internet's naming and numbering system.

auDA's Constitution governs how the organisation operates, including appointment and duties of Board Directors, and membership of auDA and its advisory committees. auDA recognises the critical importance of its role and the work it does for the benefit of all Australians and holds itself to high standards of corporate governance and integrity.

## auDA's Terms of Endorsement from the Federal Government

### Core functions

The .au domain administrator will undertake the following core functions:

- Ensure stable, secure and reliable operation of the .au domain space
- Respond quickly to matters that compromise DNS security
- Promote principles of competition, fair trading and consumer protection
- Operate as a fully self-funding and not-for-profit organisation
- Actively participate in national and international technical and policy namespace fora to ensure that Australia's interests are represented and to identify trends and developments relevant to the administration of the .au namespace
- Establish appropriate dispute resolution mechanisms.

On 2 August 2021, the Government released new draft Terms of Endorsement for auDA containing the following updated core functions. These core functions and Terms of Endorsement are the subject of community consultation:

- Ensure stable, secure and reliable operation of the .au domain, as part of Australia's suite of critical infrastructure.
  - Respond quickly to matters that compromise the security and integrity of the Domain Name System (DNS).
  - Maintain appropriate security protocols in line with Australian and international best practice, and contemporary security practices.
- Administer a licensing regime for .au domain names based in multi-stakeholder processes that is transparent, responsive, accountable, accessible and efficient.
  - Develop policies for the .au domain with a multi-stakeholder approach to provide the greatest benefit for the Australian community.
  - Maintain and ensure compliance with these policies.
  - Maintain appropriate dispute resolution policies that are consistent with Australian and international best practice.
  - Maintain a complaints process that is clear and consistent, and provides procedural fairness.
- Advocate for, and actively participate in, multi-stakeholder Internet governance processes both domestically and internationally.

To assist readers, common domain name sector and Internet governance processes and terms are defined in a glossary on page 10.



## Introduction from auDA CEO Rosemary Sinclair AM

auDA undertook its strategic planning process drawing on its experience administering the .au domain for 20 years and reflecting on the current environment.

Australia's society and economy has undergone a significant digital transformation over 2020 and 2021, driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. Restrictions on people's movement led them to utilise the Internet in increasing numbers to connect with others and reach essential services such as telehealth, remote learning and digital government services. Domain name registrations over this period also grew substantially, surpassing previous registration records.

This significant moment in history – a time when the Internet has never been so important to the lives of Australians – provided the backdrop for auDA as we considered our place in the Australian and global Internet ecosystems.

To gather a fulsome understanding of the ecosystem, we also conducted internal workshops, sought input from external experts, engaged with the Federal Government, and consulted with auDA Associate Members and the public. This work assisted us in shaping an ambitious strategic path forward over the next four years.

As set out in our Terms of Endorsement from the Federal Government, auDA administers the .au domain in the public interest. This continues to be a guiding principle in our 2021–25 Strategy.

The Strategy sets out how we will build on our solid foundations and unlock further positive social and economic value for Australians through an open, free, secure and global Internet. We will achieve this by concentrating our attention on three strategic focus areas: trust, innovation and multi-stakeholder engagement, and by developing our strategic capabilities: people and governance.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to our strategic planning and consultation processes. Your feedback has been invaluable to ensuring our Strategy best reflects the views of the multi-stakeholder community auDA represents. Our Strategy will shape our forward work plan and ensure Australians continue to benefit from a trusted .au domain and an open, free, secure and global Internet.

From everyone at auDA, we look forward to continued engagement over the coming four years to bring our vision to life.

# Our strategic planning process

**auDA undertook a thorough strategic planning process to fulfil our responsibility to the Australian community and best provide value for Australians into the future.**

## We:

- Conducted eight internal strategic workshops over 2020–21 with auDA staff and Board Directors to analyse key areas of auDA's operations and environment
- Conducted two workshops to develop auDA's values
- Hosted an interactive workshop at the 2020 NetThing Internet Governance Forum to gather early community insights into our strategy development
- Engaged with specialists across government, the technology and small business sectors, domain industry bodies and other ccTLD administrators
- Considered the Terms of Endorsement from the Federal Government and its proposed new Terms of Endorsement
- Consulted with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications
- Consulted with our multi-stakeholder community on our [2021–25 Proposed Strategy](#).

## This enabled us to:

- Explore the changing regulatory, policy and technical factors that affect Australian Internet users
- Develop a thorough understanding of auDA's capabilities and the unique role we can play in today's economy and society
- Identify areas of opportunity where auDA can build value through our work administering the trusted .au domain for the benefit of all Australians
- Develop auDA's values, strategic purpose and vision and program of work over the next four years
- Gather feedback from our multi-stakeholder community.



## Strategic environment and opportunities:

Working together with the registry, our registrars and our broad range of stakeholders, auDA's passionate and knowledgeable team collaborate to successfully administer a trusted, secure and reliable .au. As a result of our shared endeavours, the .au is in a strong position.

The current environment presents a number of opportunities for auDA in planning its future strategic direction.

Today, we know that [almost all Australians use the Internet](#) and much of our social and business activity takes place online. These **changes in online behaviours** are a result of incremental change over time as we have increased our reliance on connected devices for work, entertainment and information.

We recognise that COVID-19 has been a catalyst for significant **digital transformation** – with many workplaces moving to remote working, students moving from physical to virtual classrooms and small businesses building their digital presences to continue to reach their customers virtually.

As a result of this transformation, the risk of cybercrime has increased and **cyber security** has become an acute challenge, sparking policy and regulatory discussion across governments and the private sector. It also presents an opportunity for auDA to contribute to uplifting cyber security standards.

In setting its strategic direction, auDA is conscious of local and global challenges including the changing digital needs of Australian small businesses and individuals, and the **growth of online platforms and marketplaces** enabling users to engage digitally without using a .au domain for web or email addresses.

Additionally, as the importance of the Internet has increased, so too has debate about its **future governance**. auDA is committed to increasing its multi-stakeholder engagement to ensure the sustained social and economic benefits that flow from a free, open, secure and global Internet are supported and maintained.

## Our strategy is informed by:

### Focusing on our strengths

- Administer a trusted, secure and reliable .au
- Passionate and knowledgeable team with shared values and constructive relationships with industry
- Organisation well positioned to invest in innovation

### Opportunities for future achievement

- Grow a diverse and engaged member community
- Grow and maintain effective local and international stakeholder relationships
- Build inclusiveness of the .au domain
- Contribute to increased cyber security resilience and collaborate to address cyberthreats
- Be recognised among peers as a best practice country code administrator
- Encourage innovation and growth in the .au domain

### Current and future challenges

- Increasing number of online platforms means over time that users may rely less on domain names for web or email addresses
- Global multi-stakeholder Internet governance challenged by state sovereignty
- Increased cyber security risk environment

Our Strategy reflects the ways auDA will respond to these strengths, opportunities and challenges and continue to deliver a secure, accessible and trusted .au domain for all.

# auDA's 2021-25 STRATEGY

## Our purpose

**Administering a trusted .au for the benefit of all Australians, and championing an open, free, secure and global Internet.**

### **A trusted .au is achieved by:**

- Administering auDA policies openly and transparently, including through increased compliance activity to maintain the integrity of the .au domain
- A focus on technical efforts to reduce online harm through abuse of the DNS, including malware, botnets, phishing, pharming and related spam
- Engaging in multi-stakeholder processes, being responsive to changing needs of Internet users and fostering and contributing to local and international technical and policy decision making focussed on maintaining a free, open secure and global Internet
- Achieving international cyber security standards for auDA, the .au registry and auDA accredited registrars, and contributing to improved cyber security practice and adoption in the broad community.

### **An open, free secure and global Internet is:**

- Set out as Australian government policy in Australia's International Cyber and Critical Tech Engagement Strategy
- Defined by auDA as:
  - **Open and global** – interoperable across borders and accessible to all
  - **Free** – people are not burdened by undue restrictions in their access to and use of the Internet
  - **Secure** – safe, reliable and resilient
- Critical to ensure the sustained social and economic benefits of the Internet can be realised and enjoyed at large by the local and international community.

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## Our vision

**Unlock positive social and economic value for Australians through an open, free, secure and global Internet.**

The pandemic prompted significant digital innovation and transformation throughout Australia.

We saw business and service delivery models move online, and online community connections grow. Sectors such as health, education, retail and small businesses migrated to digital channels in order to continuously engage with their end users.

As a result, auDA's work to champion access to an open, free, secure and global Internet increased in importance. We are proud to support this accelerated shift to online working, and enhancing enterprise and community connection to the .au domain. We will continue to respond actively.

# Our strategic focus areas

**We will fulfil our strategic purpose and vision through the completion of strategic projects that are aligned to our key focus areas and capabilities.**

## Trust

To deliver outcomes that promote and enhance the security and integrity of the .au for the benefit of all Australians.

## Innovation

To challenge ourselves every day to innovate and improve the .au for Australia and to enable innovation by other stakeholders.

## Multi-stakeholder engagement

To champion the multi-stakeholder model of Internet governance that underpins an open, free, secure and global Internet, enabling the .au to create value for Australia.

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# Our strategic capabilities

**Our strategic capabilities will support auDA to deliver on its strategic purpose and vision.**

## People

Our people make the difference from driving our vision to delivering our value. We support them in their ambition for excellence in their field of expertise – technical, policy, stakeholder engagement and compliance.

## Governance

We understand our responsibilities and commit to the highest standards of transparency and accountability in our activities.

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# Our values

**We have shared values that underpin and guide the way we behave and work together and the way we engage with our multi-stakeholder community.**

## Contribute: Locally & Globally

We serve all Australians and global Internet users.

## Better Together

We collaborate and work together as one auDA.

## Strive for Excellence

We deliver value. On time, every time.

Read more about auDA's Values at [www.auda.org.au/values](http://www.auda.org.au/values)

# Our strategic projects

## Strategic focus

### Trust

Objective	Activity
Drive down DNS Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with industry to use Artificial Intelligence and other technologies to detect and report malicious domains</li> <li>Collaborate with and provide advice to the DNS Abuse Institute through active participation on its Advisory Council</li> </ul>
Drive up the integrity of the .au domain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support registry, registrars and resellers with training, validation technology and auditing to improve the integrity of registry data</li> </ul>
Lead world's best practice ccTLD security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise the standards for security awareness and practice in the .au ecosystem working with the .au registry, registrars and resellers</li> <li>Partner to develop and provide up-to-date security advice to users of the .au domain</li> </ul>

### Innovation

Objective	Activity
Improve the utility of the .au by providing greater choice of .au domain names	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce the .au direct namespace to provide increased choice for Internet users</li> <li>Plan for the introduction of internationalised domain names (IDNs)</li> </ul>
Produce leading insights from our data and community research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and share insights from auDA's own data and auDA commissioned research into the experiences and expectations of .au users</li> <li>Identify emerging opportunities and risks for individuals and small businesses to guide research opportunities</li> </ul>
Invest to enable innovation and research by others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support investment in innovation by reigniting the auDA Foundation Community Grants Program, further developing the auDA Industry Co-Marketing and Innovation Fund, and establishing partnerships with research institutions</li> </ul>

### Multi-stakeholder engagement

Objective	Activity
Grow and diversify auDA's membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement a leading member program for organisations and individuals, delivering strong value to members</li> </ul>
Increase auDA's influence in multi-stakeholder Internet governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase participation in local and international policy discussion and decision-making processes and deepen engagement with others</li> </ul>

## Strategic capabilities

### People

Objective	Activity
Build an organisation regarded as an Employer of Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support our people in their ambition to become leaders in technical standards, cyber security, stakeholder engagement, multi-stakeholder policy and compliance</li> <li>Implement leading people and culture policies, practices, programs and professional development opportunities</li> <li>Develop an innovative wellbeing program to attract and retain high calibre staff</li> </ul>
Strengthen the trust and confidence our stakeholders have in us	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work to strengthen our engagement with all stakeholders through information, innovation and engagement regularly measuring and reporting on indicators of trust and confidence</li> </ul>

### Governance

Objective	Activity
Strengthen transparency and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report against the ASX Corporate Governance Principles as appropriate for our organisation and as an independent benchmark for governance, transparency and accountability</li> </ul>
Strive for excellence in our reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt international best practice in our corporate reporting, including the guiding principles and content elements of the Integrated Reporting Framework by FY2024-25 to demonstrate the value auDA creates and maintains for stakeholders</li> </ul>

auDA is developing metrics to measure its performance against. These will be reported in auDA's Annual Report from 2021-22.



# auDA's 2021-25 STRATEGY ON A PAGE

## Purpose

Administering a trusted .au for the benefit of all Australians, and championing an open, free, secure and global Internet.

## Vision

Unlock positive social and economic value for Australians through an open, free, secure and global Internet.

## Strategic focus areas

## Strategic capabilities

### Trust

- Drive down DNS Abuse
- 
- Drive up the integrity of the .au domain
- 
- Lead world's best practice ccTLD security

### Innovation

- Improve the utility of the .au by providing greater choice of .au domain names
- 
- Produce leading insights from our data and community research
- 
- Invest to enable innovation and research by others

### Multi-stakeholder engagement

- Grow and diversify auDA's membership
- 
- Increase auDA's influence in multi-stakeholder Internet governance

### People

- Build an organisation regarded as an Employer of Choice
- 
- Strengthen the trust and confidence our stakeholders have in us

### Governance

- Strengthen transparency and accountability
- 
- Strive for excellence in our reporting

## Terms of Endorsement from the Federal Government

## Values

### Contribute: Locally & Globally

We serve all Australians and global Internet users.

### Better Together

We collaborate and work together as one auDA.

### Strive for Excellence

We deliver value. On time, every time.

# Glossary

**We recognise the domain name sector and common Internet governance processes and terms are not familiar to all. This glossary sets out commonly used terms to assist readers of auDA's Strategy.**

## Glossary of terms:

### **ccTLD**

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

### **Cyber security**

Cyber security encompasses protection and detection mechanisms, processes and systems to safeguard data and systems from cyber threats and vulnerabilities.

### **Digital transformation**

Digital transformation is the increasing adoption of digital technology in economies and societies. Digital transformation supports economic growth and social connection through greater online connectivity.

### **Domain name system (DNS)**

The DNS is a component of the Internet that enables users to find and connect to local websites and email addresses by mapping Internet Protocol (IP) numeric addresses to their corresponding domain names.

### **DNS abuse**

DNS abuse is malicious behaviour aimed at disrupting DNS infrastructure or operations. 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 abuse).

### **DNS Security Extensions (DNSSEC)**

DNS Security Extensions (DNSSEC) are security extensions that facilitate the digital signing of DNS records, helping to ensure the integrity and authenticity of DNS information.

### **The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)**

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

### **Integrated Reporting**

The International Integrated Reporting Framework is a framework for reporting based on integrated thinking and focused on how different aspects of the organisation interact to create value in the short, medium and long term.

### **Internationalised Domain Names**

Internationalised domain names contain characters not included in the traditional DNS preferred form. They enable people around the world to use domain names in local languages and scripts.

### **Multi-stakeholder Internet governance**

Internet governance can be defined as the rules, policies, standards and practices that coordinate and shape global cyberspace. Multi-stakeholder Internet governance is the process through which the multi-stakeholder community participates in decisions about the future of the Internet, recognising that all stakeholders have a valuable contribution to make.

### **Multi-stakeholder community**

The multi-stakeholder community comprises representatives from governments, industry, the technical community and civil society who all participate on an equal footing.

### **Multi-stakeholder processes**

The multi-stakeholder processes 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.

### **Open, free, secure, global Internet**

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

### **Online platforms and marketplaces**

Online platforms and marketplaces are Internet-based services such as search engines, social media platforms and online retailers that provide goods or services from multiple suppliers on a single online platform (e.g. eBay, Alibaba, Instagram and Etsy).

### **Registrars**

Registrars are companies accredited by auDA to offer .au domain name services to the public, including registering, maintaining, and renewing domain name licences. Accredited registrars have direct access to the .au registry to update registry data, under tight security controls.

### **Registry**

The .au registry is a database of all licensed domain names and associated information, such as the name and contact details of the registrant and registrar.

### **Registry operator**

The .au registry operator is Afilias Australia. Afilias Australia was appointed as the .au registry operator following a global tender process in 2017. Afilias is currently contracted to provide .au registry operations until 30 June 2024.

### **Resellers**

Resellers are businesses that provide domain name registration services to the public but are not accredited registrars. Resellers do not have direct access to the registry. They register domain names through an accredited registrar.

### **Stakeholder ecosystem**

auDA's stakeholder ecosystem is the network of key stakeholders that auDA regularly interacts with including the registry operator, registrars, resellers, registrants, local, state, and federal government entities, education and training providers, industry bodies, auDA members and Advisory Committees.

### **Terms of Endorsement**

The Terms of Endorsement outline the Federal Government's formal endorsement of auDA. The Terms of Endorsement require auDA to administer the .au domain in the public interest and in accordance with Australian laws, and ensure it is stable, secure and reliable.



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