

Received 12 October 2023

Dear AuDA,

I have finally decided to provide a submission to these feedback processes after becoming more and more unhappy with both the spirit of how domain names were originally issued, and the process that has evolved into a bureaucratic mess based on restriction and denying use of the .au namespace to the Australian community.

This originally started with the .com.au namespace - which at the time, was understandable to want to avoid the mess that the generic .com became.

This self-justification though has expanded into just about every .au TLD that is now offered.

As a holder of domains that are older than the AuDA organisation, I am constantly waiting for the message from my registrar that I am no longer eligible to hold domains that would be old enough to vote.

The rules regarding the .net.au domain space have slowly crept further and further into the restrictions that were originally only intended for the .com.au domain space. We are now at a point where the restrictions are exactly the same - and making the rules harder to apply to individuals does not promote any natural usage of the .net.au domain space.

I personally use a .net.au for internal stuff that has no relation to a company, doesn't sell a product, and I look forward to forwarding the ATO a copy of your policy of why I am required to have an ABN for the purpose of renewing a .net.au domain - just to cancel it again. This is pure bureaucratic bullshit that does nothing for the stated purposes of which they are introduced.

The continued tightening of the .org.au namespace is likely to eventually result in a community based domain not meeting the new requirements - and at some point being discontinued. Once a forefront of promoting technology within Australia, now mostly based for historical reasons will not meet the new requirements - even though the domain has been registered for longer than AuDA has existed.

Couple all this with the complete mess that the .au Direct process has been - making 'eligible' entities compete against each other for who chickens out first losing any and all rights - meanwhile pocketing the registration fee yearly for providing no service, no product, and essentially palming off all responsibility for the process to individuals. This type of administration was the entire function that AuDA was founded for in the first place.

If AuDA wishes to palm this off and not perform any functions other than self-fulfilling bureaucratic process, reducing the accessibility of the .au namespace within Australia - while claiming the complete and utter bullshit reasons of security - then we would be better placed in replacing AuDA with a different organisation focusing on a free and open system to foster innovation, adoption, and focusing on original goals of a domain name management system.

AuDA still continues to do nothing regarding domain squatters [REDACTED] from taking any domain name in the .au scope the minute it expires - and holding them for potential ransom for legitimate Australian entities (both individual and businesses) - seeing this happen for a .au Direct domain I decided not to renew, I was amazed that AuDA talks big about security and trust, yet its practices do not back that up with what actually happens in the online environment.

Scope creep and bureaucratic wet dreams have changed what AuDA is focusing on into something completely different - as demonstrated in the .au weekly newsletter which is almost nothing to do with AuDA's role and functions.

Given that AuDA made \$16.9M in a single year, yet only spent \$1.3M on actual DNS infrastructure - completely overshadowed by a \$2.6M marketing spend - and over \$6M in salaries, then it shows where AuDA has jumped the shark to not represent the core functions that it was originally envisioned to do.

AuDA has lost more on its speculative stock investments than allocated to new DNS infrastructure spends over a single financial year.

The remuneration paid to 'management' of AuDA - totalling \$2.6M for a single year and split between 15 people - to attend a maximum of 9 board meetings and up to 14 other meetings per year is the very definition of a gravy train. No doubt some individuals within AuDA are getting close to the salary of our Prime Minister - for overseeing something that started off having entire sections of the .au namespace maintained by a single person at a university in their spare time. To this day, the entire .au namespace is still smaller than databases administered competently by many organisations with a fraction of the operating budget of AuDA.

It would be very wise for AuDA to consider the actual purpose for its entire existence - as a service to Australians, to benefit Australians, and not to channel millions of dollars to investments, director salaries, marketing, and other aspects that have no place within the scope of AuDA's actual function. There is a reason that many technically savvy people tune out from the message that AuDA is pushing and completely ignore the .au namespace - so they do not have to abide by any of the rules deemed to be overly bureaucratic and becoming more and more restrictive. Putting any long term faith in the rules of AuDA not changing and forcing them out of using an existing domain at a random point in the future is seen as a real risk to even considering using the .au namespace - with many companies avoiding it completely - should be seen as a sign of the current trajectory of AuDA not being fit for purpose.

I am submitting this via a mostly-anonymous account - as I have no doubt that given what I have submitted, my existing domains may well be threatened - and as an AuDA member, I do not wish to put myself in this position.

¹ auDA has redacted part of this submission for legal reasons.