

Community Geographic 2LDs - Registry / Registrar Options

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Introduction

The National Reference Group invites public comment on the registry and registrar options for community geographic domain names set out in this document.

Public submissions should be addressed to:

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The closing date for submissions is **Friday 10 January 2004**.

All submissions will be posted on the auDA website.

Background

In November 2002, auDA announced that it would create eight new 2LDs for Australian states and territories - act.au, nsw.au, nt.au, qld.au, sa.au, tas.au, vic.au, wa.au - in order to preserve Australian geographic names for use by the relevant community.

The proposed domain structure is placename.state/territory.au - for example, bathurst.nsw.au or ballarat.vic.au. The central principle of the proposal is that use of the domain names be restricted to community website portals that reflect community interests, such as local business, tourism, historical information, special interest groups, and cultural events.

auDA is committed to ensuring that the geographic 2LDs are implemented in a way that maximises their public appeal and utility, whilst still preserving their community-based purpose. auDA has therefore established a National Reference Group comprising key stakeholders, including representatives of all levels of Australian government, to play a high-level policy advisory role during the implementation period. The registry and registrar options set out in this document have been drafted by the National Reference Group.

More background information about the community geographic 2LDs and the National Reference Group is available on the auDA website.

Registry Option

The role of the registry is to:

- maintain the database of domain names;
- maintain the 2LD nameservers; and
- provide a public WHOIS service

The registry must be national (ie. for all eight 2LDs); it would not be cost effective to establish eight separate registries.

In accordance with auDA's competition model for the domain name industry in Australia, the registry operator would be determined by competitive tender. Prospective registry operators would determine a fee that enables them to meet the cost of running a registry to auDA's technical standards over the term of the contract.

The domain name pricing model would be the same as in the open 2LDs, comprising an auDA fee, a registry fee (wholesale) and a registrar fee (retail). For example, an \$90 com.au domain name licence comprises fees to auDA of \$11 and to the registry of \$45, and the remaining \$44 is the fee charged by the registrar.

Registrar Options

The role of the registrar is to:

- register and renew domain names in the registry database; and
- update domain name records.

The National Reference Group has identified five options at the registrar level.

1. Multiple registrars for all 2LDs.

Under this option the community geographic 2LDs would be open to all accredited registrars (there are currently 19 auDA accredited registrars). Domain name registrants would choose their own registrar based on competitive price and service offerings.

This option would promote full industry competition and consumer choice. Because the registrars would already be accredited by auDA and operating in the market, there would be no additional cost or administrative overhead for auDA.

2. Single registrar for all 2LDs.

Under this option a single accredited registrar would be appointed by competitive tender to provide services for registrants in all 2LDs.

This option would promote limited industry competition. The fixed fee charged by a single registrar may be more cost-effective than market-based fees, and there would also be less risk of consumer confusion caused by dealing with multiple registrars.

3. Single registrar for each 2LD, or group of 2LDs.

Under this option a maximum of 8 accredited registrars would be appointed by competitive tender to provide services for registrants in each 2LD. Due to the limited number of domain names available in each jurisdiction, it would likely be more cost-effective to appoint single registrars for a group of 2LDs.

As with option 2 above, the fixed fee charged by a single registrar may be more cost-effective than market-based fees, and there would also be less risk of consumer confusion caused by dealing with multiple registrars.

4. Combined registry/registrar for all 2LDs.

Under this option the registry operator would also act as registrar. A combined registry operator and registrar would be determined by competitive tender.

auDA's normal policy is that a registry operator cannot also be a registrar within the same domain space. However, an exception to this policy may be justified in the case of the community geographic 2LDs, to take account of the limited number of available domain names and the not-for-profit status of the prospective registrants.

5. State/territory governments act as registrar in their own jurisdiction.

Under this option, registrar services would be provided by a government agency in each jurisdiction. Government agencies would be accredited by auDA to act as registrars.