

October 2021

Submission to the National
Indigenous Australians Agency's
Discussion Paper on the

Indigenous Digital Inclusion Plan



Introduction

auDA

.au Domain Administration Limited (auDA) is the .au Country Code Top Level Domain (ccTLD¹) administrator and self-regulatory policy body.

We are endorsed by the Australian Government and through agreement with the global Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) to oversee the operation and management framework of the .au domain of the Internet.

As a critical part of the digital economy, our purpose is to provide a safe, secure, and reliable namespace for the benefit of all Australians.

auDA performs the following functions:

- develop and implement domain name policy
- license 2LD registry operators
- accredit and license registrars
- implement consumer safeguards
- facilitate .au Dispute Resolution Policy
- represent .au at ICANN and other international fora
- technical management of the .au zone file
- manage and maintain a secure and stable Domain Name System.

auDA operates under an industry self-regulatory model, working closely with suppliers, business users, non-profit organisations, consumers and the Australian Government.

It seeks to serve the interests of the Internet community as a whole and takes a multi-stakeholder approach to Internet governance, where all interested parties can have their say.

Advocacy

auDA's advocacy is guided by the following key principles:

1. **Purpose driven** – we are a for purpose organisation. Our purpose is to:
 - a. administer a trusted .au domain for the benefit of all Australians
 - b. champion an open, free, secure and global internet
2. **Multi-stakeholder Approach** – we take a multi-stakeholder approach to our work, working closely with domain name suppliers, businesses, not-for-profit organisations, education and training providers, consumers and Government entities to serve the interests of the Internet community as a whole.

¹ The .au ccTLD includes the following namespaces: .au, com.au, net.au, org.au, asn.au, id.au, vic.au, nsw.au, qld.au, sa.au, tas.au, wa.au, nt.au, act.au, edu.au, and gov.au.



3. **Independence** – we are independent from government and operate transparently and openly in the interests of all Australians
4. **Leadership** – we seek to actively advance an open, free, secure and global internet and positively influence policy and outcomes related to internet governance, including through undertaking research and informing and educating Australians about an open, free and secure internet and its benefits
5. **Support the digital economy through innovation and partnership** – we seek to partner with like-minded organisations and foster innovation across the technology sector, recognising its benefit to growing our digital economy and, in turn, benefitting of all Australians. We recognise the impact that legislative burden can have on innovation in the technology sector and encourage a consultative approach to regulation.

auDA recognises it is one stakeholder in Australia's vast digital ecosystem. However, as noted above, much of our work in administering Australia's domain name infrastructure is undertaken through a multi-stakeholder approach and in partnership with others for the benefit of all Australians.

We look forward to engaging with the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) as it works to strengthen indigenous digital inclusion in Australia.

Submission

auDA appreciates the NIAA's Discussion Paper has a focus on digital inclusion, in particular the issues of access, affordability and digital ability. auDA offers the below comments in response.

auDA's support for digital Inclusion

We recognise that the internet is a great enabler to individuals, businesses, not-for-profits, educational institutions and government entities.

auDA's purpose is to provide a safe, secure, and reliable namespace for the benefit of all Australians. Accordingly, we are committed to digital inclusion and seek to ensure that its benefits can be understood and accessed by all Australians, regardless of their geographic location.

The auDA Foundation

Since 2006, auDA has supported the [auDA Foundation](#), a charitable trust established to promote and encourage educational and research activities to enhance the utility of the internet. It does this through the distribution of grants to successful applicants.

Over the last 15-years the Foundation has supported numerous projects to further indigenous communities, including:



- 2016 – Central Queensland University grant to develop an offline digital map identifying the location of free wifi services for Indigenous Australians.
- 2013 – Aboriginal Literacy Hub grant to develop an online Digital Literacy Hub to provide access to literacy resources, Apps, e-books, community forums and evaluation tools for remote Indigenous communities.
- 2012 – Monash Indigenous Centre grant for the development of an online, interactive visualisation of country, a digital archive of Australian landscapes.

The auDA Foundation's [2021 grant round](#) has recently closed and included a category for digital inclusion with an emphasis on Indigenous Australians. We were pleased to receive numerous applications and look forward to announcing successful grant recipients shortly.

auDA research

auDA further seeks to support digital inclusion through community research.

auDA is currently undertaking research into the digital lives of Australians and hopes it will become an annual, longitudinal study of interest to policy makers, industry and scholars across Australia.

Through this research, auDA seeks to better understand Australians use of the internet, how they seek to use the internet, challenges they may experience – including those of access, affordability and digital ability – and how they seek to resolve these challenges.

auDA recognises that it is only through developing a better understanding the digital lives of Australians that we can seek to address fundamental challenges and improve issues including access, affordability and digital ability.

auDA innovation

auDA recently released [2021-25 Strategy](#) sets innovation as key area of strategic focus. One of the ways in which we seek to innovate to develop the .au domain and ensure it delivers greater choice for Australian internet users.

In coming years, this work will include the release of internationalised domain names (e.g. 例如 .au). This will enable domain names to be written in international scripts including Mandarin, Vietnamese, Arabic, Korean and Japanese, and support local and regional digital communications and commerce.

auDA is also interested to consult with Indigenous groups to understand whether there is a demand for an Australian indigenous namespace, such as can be found in New Zealand with maori.nz. auDA would be pleased to have the support of the NIAA to undertake these consultations.



Conclusion

As demonstrated in this submission, auDA supports digital inclusion and is committed to ensuring its work to support Australia's digital economy and society benefits all Australians, not just those living in metropolitan areas.

auDA also supports the government's aim to develop an Indigenous Digital Inclusion Plan focussing on the issues of access, affordability and digital ability.

Should the NIAA or the government wish to consult further on any of the above auDA initiatives, we would welcome the opportunity to provide input.

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