

# **GEOGRAPHIC 2LDs – Discussion Paper**

## **New Names Advisory Panel**

**August 2002**

### **Introduction**

In May 2002, .au Domain Administration (auDA) called for proposals for the creation of new second level domains (2LDs), to be evaluated by an independent New Names Advisory Panel (the Panel). The Call for Proposals and Terms of Reference for the Panel are available on the auDA website at <http://www.ada.org.au/policy/panel-newname-2002>

One of the categories for new 2LDs is "geographic". The Call for Proposals stated that auDA would give priority to "proposals that focus on non-commercial, community use of domain names" in geographic 2LDs.

The Panel has considered the two substantive proposals for the creation of a system of geographic 2LDs in the community interest, from One City One Site (OCOS) and cBallarat. These proposals are in essential agreement as to the purpose and principles of a geographic naming system:

- "to preserve community geographic names for community use" (core purpose, OCOS)
- enabling the development of community portal websites representing such things as tourism, agriculture, local business, employment and environmental issues
- necessary because other Australian place names under 2LDs or under TLDs have been snapped up by commercial users, cybersquatted or simply denied
- local ownership of the town or locality name is a strongly held principle
- there is an agreed need to demonstrate broad community benefit, rather than primarily private or commercial benefit, and that the initiative is community-based and -focused.

Both proposals envisage a system of 2LDs based on the model [www.statename.au](http://www.statename.au), where the substantive domain names would be 3LDs along the lines [www.locality.statename.au](http://www.locality.statename.au) - such as [www.bathurst.nsw.au](http://www.bathurst.nsw.au) or [www.ballarat.vic.au](http://www.ballarat.vic.au)

The two proposals are available on the auDA website at:  
<http://www.ada.org.au/policy/submissions/ballarat.pdf>  
<http://www.ada.org.au/policy/submissions/ocos-part1.pdf>

A third proposal was received on this subject but differed markedly from the two detailed above. While the Panel has not discounted the proposal by Stephen Gethin, it is not discussed in this paper.

### **Preliminary views of the Panel**

The Panel strongly supports the creation of a system of community-based geographic 2LDs along the lines proposed by OCOS and cBallarat. At this stage, the Panel plans to recommend the adoption of the proposed new structure, which combines new 2LDs with new 3LDs for Australian geographic communities.

The Panel now seeks input from the wider community on the two proposals.

The Panel wishes to emphasise that, at this stage of the process, it has not reached any firm conclusions about the two proposals. As part of this consultation, the Panel strongly encourages the two proposing bodies to comment on issues raised in the discussion paper. The Panel would also welcome any additional information from OCOS and cBallarat that might address some of the concerns raised in this paper.

### **Comments on the proposals and other matters**

The Panel provides the following comments, clarifications and questions.

- National uniformity. Australia's geographic 2LD scheme would be nationally uniform, in that allocation of domain names would follow the same eligibility rules and the same processes in all states and territories.
- Processes. Community domain names will involve creation of a system which provides some assurance that groups proposing local 3LDs are adequately representative of the community. Both the OCOS and cBallarat proposals suggest state bodies which would evaluate proposals, as well as other approval processes, and appropriate appeal mechanisms. The Panel would appreciate comments on these processes. We acknowledge that some of the processes will need to be worked through to ensure that they are practical.
- The Panel believes that management of community websites (or portals) is a separate issue to allocation of domain names.
- All geographic names are of equal 3LD status. Beyond the state/territory 2LD, any community of any size could establish an online presence – there would be no further hierarchy of names.
- Registry. A registry for the whole system would be selected by competitive tender, following procedures already established within Australia's domain name system.
- Ancillary domain names – other layers. There is the option (but not the necessity) of using the 2LD ([www.state.au](http://www.state.au) or [www.australia.au](http://www.australia.au) ) as state or national community-based portal websites. The Panel welcomes comments on these suggestions.
- Geographic names in other 2LDs. At present geographic names are not permitted in com.au or net.au, although they are permitted in all other .au 2LDs. The Panel's view is that there would be grounds for removing the prohibition in com.au and net.au, should the auDA Board approve the proposal for community-based geographic domain names.
- Definition of a geographic name. Under the proposal, the state bodies including representatives of place name authorities, would determine which names were appropriate for use as 3LDs. They would also determine matters of style and presentation (eg. whether hyphens should be used in multi-word names).

- Implementation. It is clear, as OCOS suggests, that some operational issues would only be resolved as they were worked through in practice. OCOS therefore proposes a pilot project before full release. The Panel notes that the process for allocating domain names and establishing the eligibility criteria could be subject to trial. However, because of the need for a significant technical investment to create the new 2LDs, it would not be financially viable to delete the 2LDs if they failed to work for policy or process reasons. A gradual implementation could result in modification, but not easily in revocation of the scheme.

### **How to make a submission**

The Panel strongly supports a community-focused geographic naming system such as that proposed by OCOS and cBallarat. The Panel welcomes your comments on these proposals, and on the Panel's preliminary views about them.

People should send their submission to:

Ms Jo Lim  
Chief Policy Officer  
auDA  
email: [jo.lim@auda.org.au](mailto:jo.lim@auda.org.au)  
fax: 03 9349 5711

Electronic submissions are preferred.

All submissions will be posted on the auDA website within 2 working days of receipt.

The closing date for submissions is **Friday 27 September 2002**.