

We at register.com commend auDA and the Competition Model Advisory Panel for striving to improve the .au domain space through competition, and welcome the opportunity to comment on the .au Domain Space Public Consultation Report that was posted by the Panel in February of 2001. By way of introduction, Register.com is an ICANN accredited registrar as well as a provider of registry and other Internet services. We are excited to see competition introduced to the .au domain space and look forward to the improvements it will bring to .au and the Internet community.

International Competition

Register.com considers competition to be very important at both the registry and registrar levels. We encourage the AuDA to open competition for the registry to international registry providers and to allow all ICANN accredited registrars to offer .au domain names. Broad international competition will foster improved products and services in the .au domain space, allow .au to build on the experience of the greater Internet community, and further encourage innovation and quality service.

International registry applicants would contribute by offering to provide the technology available in the greater domain name market to the .au domain. These technological innovations would promote business efficiency, a stated goal of the Consultation Report (Section 1.3). Furthermore, applications from international registry providers would help create competitive prices at the registry level.

Similarly, at the registrar level, participation by all ICANN accredited registrars, a group far broader than the registrars currently located in Australia, would encourage lower prices and higher service standards. The experience in the global generic TLDs is that registrar competition fostered domain name market growth. Therefore in the .au domain, we would expect that competition would expand the market, allowing new Australian registrars and other Internet-related businesses to enter and thrive.

Competition Benefits of Proposal 4.3 A versus 4.3 B

As noted in the Consultation Report, proposals 4.3 A and 4.3 B both offer benefits to industry participants. The establishment of multiple registries proposed in 4.3 A could extend the benefits of competition seen in the application process to the ongoing administration of the registry. However, we feel that the cost efficiency and stabilization provided by maintaining a single registry outweigh these benefits once the selection of a registry provider has been made. The establishment of a sophisticated registry database takes an enormous amount of money and resources. A single registry will help prevent both increased prices and the temptation to sacrifice security and quality that would be a necessary consequence of these high costs if the market were fragmented into numerous second level domain registries.

4.3.5 Public Information Service (WHOIS)

We would like to note our approval of the public information service provision in section 4.3.5. This is a valuable service for the intellectual property community. However, in the interest of privacy for end users, Register.com would like to recommend that there be no Bulk WHOIS licensing requirement for marketing purposes, as currently required by gTLD registrars in the ICANN accreditation agreement. Our experience has been that requiring registrars to release customer data for marketing purposes has been prone to abuse and is raising opposition from consumers and consumer protection interests in the U.S. and Europe.