

auDA Name Policy Advisory Panel Submission

Re: Non-romanized domain names with the .au domain

Date: 8 December 2000

Recommendation:

That auDA explore the possibility of the registration of non-romanized domain names within the .au domain.

Background:

English speakers currently make up just under half of the World's online linguistic population. By 2004, the percentage will have dropped to a little under a third¹.

Chinese is already the second largest online linguistic population and the number of Chinese speakers online is expected to triple by 2003. This has important implications for Australia as the percentage of Australians born in Europe has declined since the seventies, whilst the proportion of Australians born in Asia has increased. Today, around 15% of Australians speak a language other than English at home².

With the growing popularity of XML, it won't be long before we start seeing non-roman characters making up some of the building blocks of web applications and pseudocode. More and more IT staff will look to work in their native language as they engage in remote management of web sites.

Currently, Australian businesses and organisations register domain names in English in overseas countries. It is not hard to understand why. Entities with names that are well known in the one marketplace usually seek to use them when they extend their activities overseas. Companies and organisations based overseas may well wish to do the same when operating in Australia.

For example, a Hong Kong newspaper may wish to publish an online Australian edition, on a server in Australia, with the domain name in Chinese.

Whilst nobody would expect auDA to establish a policy framework in such an uncertain area, I think that it is worth the Panel giving consideration to this issue, as early action is likely to give Australia a competitive advantage in this rapidly evolving area of the Internet.

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¹ Evolution and Projections of Online Linguistic Populations,
<http://www.gleach.com/globstats/evol.html>

² ABS 1999, Population Composition: Languages Spoken in Australia,
<http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/ABS%40.nsf/94713ad445ff1425ca25682000192af2/7df24dbd701ce508ca25699f0005d614!OpenDocument>