

Submission to the Review of Australia's .au domain management

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This response addresses the areas of “stakeholder engagement and membership” & “governance and management”.

Stakeholder Engagement and Membership

Demand/supply distinction

auDA's website currently lists 49 supply members whilst demand has 254 members, yet each group still elects an equal 4 directors. Thus this distinction between demand and supply class has the effect of each supply member vote having far more weight than each demand member vote.

Supply elections also tend to have low numbers of candidates. At the recent 2017 AGM only 2 people stood on the day so they were elected regardless of voting.

The small number of supply class members also makes it susceptible to branch stacking issues. A better model for auDA may be to have one membership class only, thus all members would have an equal say.

Size of the membership base

With 303 members auDA's membership base could be considered to be small. A significant expansion of the membership base would have a number of positive effects.

In particular it could,

- Reduce the effects of branch stacking,
- Involve more people in the organisation
- Result in more diverse stakeholder viewpoints (for example if more small business people joined).

Governance & Management

Board Arrangements - Casual vacancies of directors

auDA has faced considerable criticism regarding the way in which casual director vacancies have been filled, in particular demand side appointments. The process can potentially work against a particular membership class. For example “supply directors” may lobby for a particular choice of a “demand director”. This lobbying risks potential supply side capture of demand class.

A way of avoiding this issue would be for casual vacancies to be filled through a by-election. This would require a change to auDA’s constitution.

Independent directors

A person who has previously been a demand or supply class director should not be eligible to be appointed as an independent director. This would require a change to the definition of “independent director” in auDA’s constitution.

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