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English only

**Eighth United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names**

Berlin, 27 August-5 September 2002

Item 8 of the provisional agenda*

**Economic and social benefits of the national and
international standardization of geographical names**

**The one-city one-site proposal: report by Australia on a
proposal to secure geographical names for community use
as Internet domain names**

Submitted by Australia**

* E/CONF.94/1.

** Prepared by Brian Goodchild, Chairman, Committee for Geographical Names of Australasia.



Background

In 1997 the company administering the Internet com.au domain space in Australia wrote to the Chairman of the Committee for Geographical Names of Australasia (CGNA) regarding the use of Australian place names as Internet domain names. The company, Melbourne IT, administered the domain name space in accordance with policies accepted by the Australian Internet Industry, and this included not allocating gazetted place names as domain names. There were a few examples of names being allocated before the policy was adopted, but in general the policy meant that most Australian place names were not used as domain names in the .com.au domain. It particularly related to the use of town, suburb, locality etc type names. The gazetteer of Australia was used as the source list to check names, with some queries being referred to the various state and territory naming authorities.

As one would expect, a lot has happened since 1997 in this rapidly developing industry, and the administration of domain names is now the responsibility of the .au Domain Administration (auDA). For now, place names are still not used in the .com.au domain space, but this is currently under review, as are other domain name issues. This paper details an Australian proposal to reserve the use of place names as domain names for use by communities.

Australian Domain Administration

.au Domain Administration (*auDA*) was formed in April 1999 as the industry self-regulatory body for the .au namespace (Internet domains that end in *.au*) and are a non-profit company. *auDA*'s Name Policy Advisory Panel is reviewing the eligibility and allocation policies for domain names in the .au namespace.

auDA encourages everyone with an interest in Domain Names to participate in the review, subscribe to the discussion list, and make submissions.

auDA has now produced three Public Consultation Reports. The first report made reference to the current restrictions on the licensing of generic, geographical or objectionable names. Section 4.2.2 of the report outlines issues on relaxing the current policy and enabling the licensing of geographical names as domain names.

Parts four and five of the "*auDA* Name Policy Advisory Panel's Second Public Consultation Report" state:

4.3.1 Until an appropriate licence allocation method has been devised, the licensing of generic domain names should be prohibited and following 'reserved list' approach should be adopted:

- a. a definition of the term 'generic' will be developed;*
- b. domain names that have to date been rejected by the current registrars for being generic will be placed on a reserved list;*
- c. new applications for domain names that may be considered generic will be referred to auDA;*
- d. if the domain name is determined by auDA to be generic then it will be added to the reserved list; and*
- e. applicants may challenge domain names on the reserved list, and auDA will determine whether the name should remain on the reserved list or whether changed circumstances mean the name can be licensed.*

4.3.2 Until an appropriate licence allocation method has been devised, the licensing of geographic domain names should be prohibited, using the same reserved list approach outlined in 4.3.1 (substituting 'geographic' for 'generic').

4.3.3 The licensing of objectionable domain names should be prohibited, using the same reserved list approach outlined in 5.3.1 (substituting 'objectionable' for 'generic').

5.1.1 A limited number of new 2LDs should be introduced in the .au domain space.

5.1.2 The Name Policy Advisory Panel will undertake a separate public consultation process to determine what the new 2LDs should be, and how they should be managed.

The One City One Site (OCOS) Working Party

The One City One Site Working Party was formed in November 2000 in response to community concern over possible commercial misuse of geographical names as second level domains. It is a community based working party, and Paul Harcombe, the Deputy Chairman of the Geographical Names Board of NSW was invited to participate in it. The central concern of OCOS has been the potential to misrepresent the community and its town, city or suburb to whom that name belongs.

It is evident that the Web will continue to expand and develop at an ever-increasing rate. In the near future all Australian communities will be online and will want to have a logical; easy to remember, universal domain name that can be used for local information, tourism and business links. A protected domain owned and maintained by the community, through the Local Government Authority with each state or territory naming authority which would control the allocation of the Domain Name, is proposed

The Working Party proposes a fair and equitable Second Level Domain system for reservation, and restricted use, of Australian geographical names that both protect and promote the geographical area and its community.

It takes the simple form of: *placename.state.au* or *placename.territory.au*

The OCOS model for the allocation of community domain names is included as Attachment A to this document.

A draft submission was developed and presented to auDA for comment. It is believed that this submission played an important role in auDA's further considerations. The OCOS response to the current auDA position is as follows

The response outlined the following points:

1. *One City One Site* supports auDA's recommendation to continue the restrictions on the use of Geographical Names as 2LD's until an appropriate licence allocation method has been devised
2. auDA should consider a review of the current Grandfather clause so currently assigned Geographical Domain Names can be re licensed if necessary
3. *One City One Site* supports a separate public consultation process to determine new 2LDs.
4. *One City One Site* will contribute to this consultation process.

The Working Party's proposed 2LD Model has been strongly supported by letters of support from community leaders and groups, which OCOS has actively sought. The publicity circulated by OCOS seeking support is Attachment B to this report. The final outcome of the proposal is still under consideration by auDA.

Conclusion

This report and the attachments promotes a model for the use of geographic names as Internet Domain names. Its objective is to ensure that such names are reserved for the general community that identifies itself with that name, and also to ensure that the economic and social benefits that flow from such use are of direct benefit to that community.

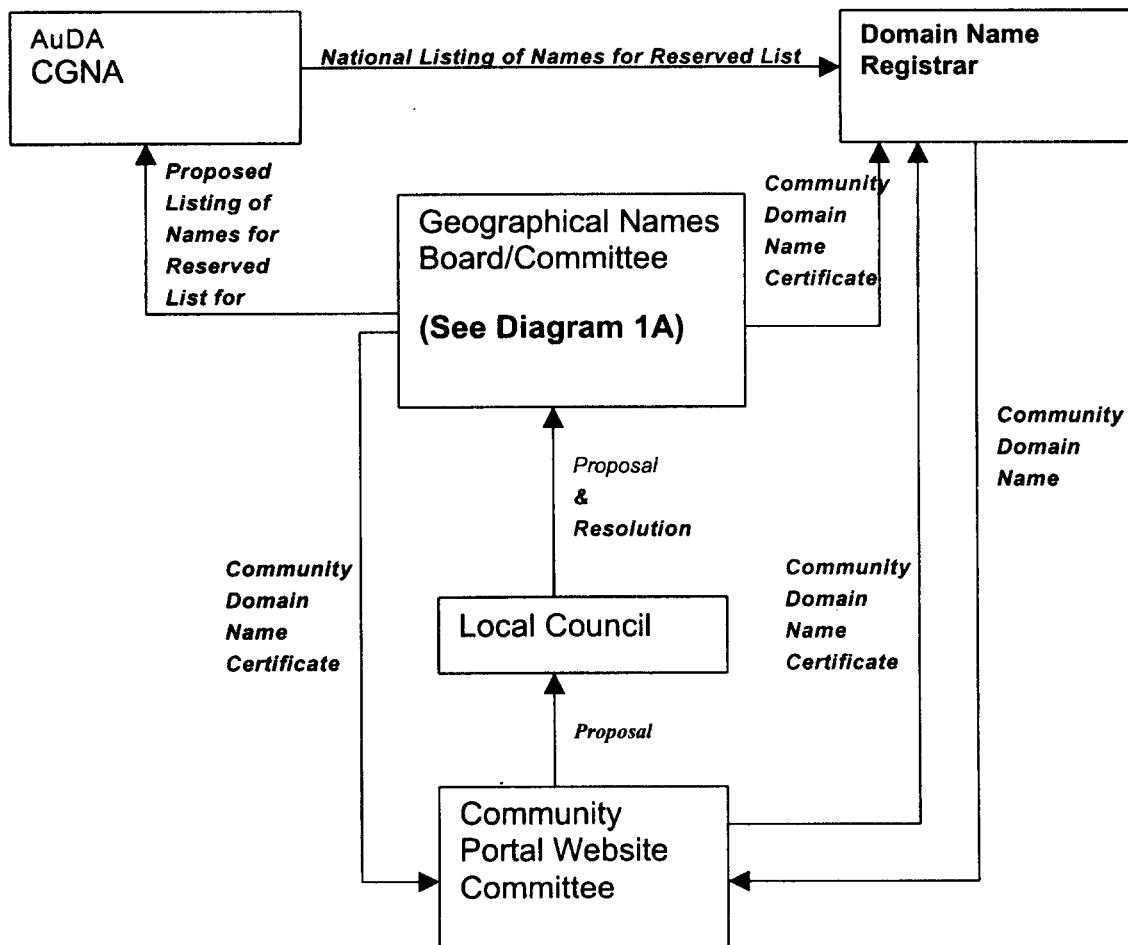
THE PROPOSED MODEL FOR THE ALLOCATION OF COMMUNITY DOMAIN NAMES

The proposed model has four tiers, which will allow the integrity of the name to be retained.

The process is based on the procedure for the allocation of geographical names, which has been in place since 1966.

“Diagram 1” shows a basic schematic of the overall model.

Diagram 1: Proposed Model for the allocation of Community Domain Names



.au Domain Administration Limited (*auDA*):

As the regulatory body for the .au name space, *auDA* would authorise the allocation of Geographical Names as Community Domain Names to each individual State Board/Committee in charge of Geographical Names. To ensure consistency, National Standards would be developed by the Committee for Geographical Naming of Australasia (CGNA) which is the peak body for each naming jurisdiction. Each Geographical Names Board/Committee would submit a list of proposed names. All names would have to be formally assigned/gazetted per the Parliamentary Act governing that jurisdiction.

The names submitted would be limited to a listing of agreed designations. This agreement would be between each State's/Territory's Geographical Names Board/Committee and the CGNA, then between the CGNA and *auDA*. It is worth stating that these designations may differ between States/Territories due to the fact that designations are not co-incident between jurisdictions at this stage.

The Community Domain Name will take the form of:

www.placename.state.au

or

www.placename.territory.au

eg. www.bathurst.nsw.au

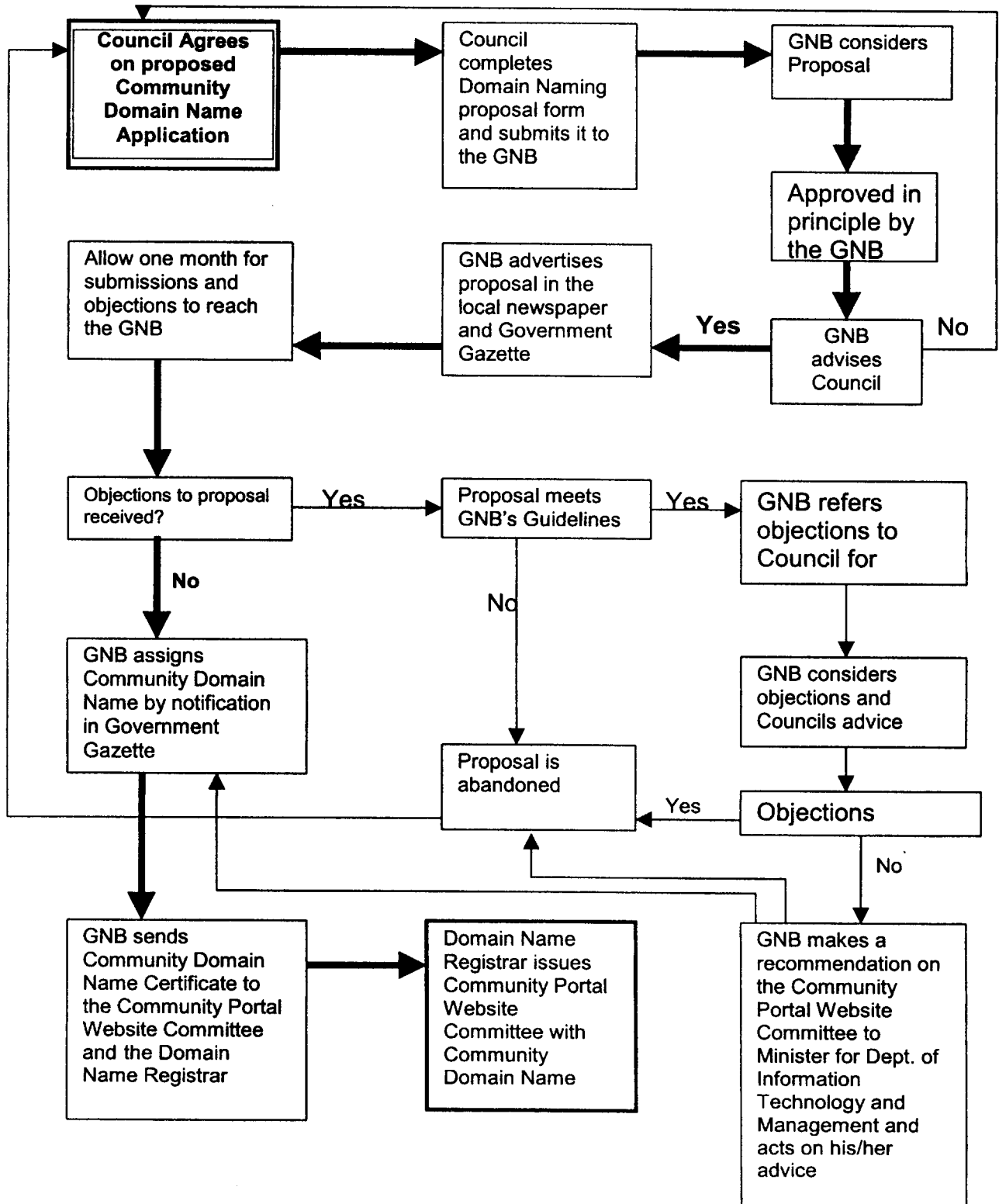
Geographical Names Board/Committee:

Every State and Territory within Australia has a Board or Committee in charge of the naming of geographical features. These organisations are empowered by individual State/Territory legislation.

The Geographical Names Board/Committee would assign the use of a Community Domain Name per the procedures currently in place for the gazettal of place names. That is, a proposal would be forwarded through Local Council to the Geographical Names Board/Committee. The Geographical Names Board/Committee would evaluate the proposal and would ensure it met a set of published guidelines (yet to be developed). Once approved the community would be canvassed for objections, which in-turn would be resolved by the Geographical Names Board/Committee and Local Council. If the objections could not be resolved the Geographical Names Board/Committee would make a recommendation and refer the proposal to the its State/Territory Minister who would then make the final decision. The Community Domain Name would be published in the State/Territory Government Gazette once formally assigned. This process is outlined in Diagram 1A.

This procedure would ensure that the Geographical Name would retain its integrity, the community would be consulted and disputes would be resolved.

Diagram 1A: Proposed Process for the Geographical Names Board for the allocation of Community Domain Names



Local Council:

Council would control the management of all proposals. Proposals can be vetted through the use of Geographical Names Board/Committee guidelines.

The Domain Name would be passed by the way of resolution at a regular council meeting.

The Community:

Community Domain Name delegation is intended to serve the needs and interests of particular communities and, importantly, to encourage the participation of community members in all aspects of the Community Portal Website operation, including the selection and provision of material. Services are defined as being that which:

- are provided for community purposes; and
- are not operated for profit or as part of a profit-making enterprise; and
- provide material that:
 - (a) are able to be received by commonly available equipment; and
 - (b) are made available free to the general public.

Community Domain Name Certificates can be allocated to eligible applicants for periods of up to 5 years (see 'Who may apply for a Certificate?' below)

Community Domain Name Certificates cannot be renewed, but an existing Community Portal website Committee can make application for a new certificate before the expiration of a current certificate. The term and conditions of a new certificate may be different to those of an earlier one.

In deciding whether it will allocate a Community Domain Name Certificate the Geographical Names Board/Naming Committee have regard to:

- the extent that the proposed Community Portal Web Site would meet the needs of the community in an area;
- the nature and diversity of the interests of that community; and
- the capacity of the applicant to provide the service.
- the undesirability of one person being in a position to exercise control of more than one Community Portal Website; and
- the undesirability of the Commonwealth, a State or a Territory or a political party being in a position to exercise control of a Community Portal Website.

Before allocating a Community Domain Name Certificate the Geographical Names Board/Naming Committee must:

- designate a particular area as the community area of the certificate;
- determine the timing conditions of the certificate; and
- determine a period of up to 5 years as the certificate period.

WHO MAY APPLY FOR A COMMUNITY DOMAIN NAME CERTIFICATE?

The Geographical Names Board/Naming Committee can only accept applications from organisations that:

- (a) are formed in Australia or in an external Territory; and
- (b) represent a community interest.
- (c) **Are either an Incorporated Association, a Co-operative, or a Local Government Committee**
- (d) **Have the support of local Council by way of resolution**

'Community interest'. The Geographical Names Board/Naming Committee state that the most useful definition of 'community' is one which is broad and takes into account social, historical and cultural linkages. An applicant for a Community Domain Name Certificate should therefore be, at a minimum, a not for profit, locally, based, representative organisation with clearly defined purposes and transparent non-discriminatory membership rules. It would be suggested that the Community Portal Website Committee have representation from the following community groups:

- Tourism
- Business (Chamber of Commerce)
- Not –For-Profit/ Charity/ Volunteer Groups
- Government (Local. State. Federal)
- Sports and Recreation
- Community Media
- Education

HOW WILL DECISIONS BE PUBLICISED?

The Geographical Names Board/Naming Committee will publicise decisions on the allocation of Community Domain Name Certificates in the relevant Government Gazette. A written notification (The Community Domain Name Certificate) will also be given to the applicant and the Domain Name Registrar chosen by the applicant.

WHAT CONDITIONS APPLY TO COMMUNITY DOMAIN NAME CERTIFICATE

1. the Community Portal Website committee will continue to represent the community interest that is represented at the time when the certificate was allocated;
2. the Community Portal Website committee will encourage members of the community that it serves to participate in:
3. the operations of the Community Portal Website committee in providing the service; and
4. the selection and provision of material under the certificate.
5. Once the Community Domain Name is assigned it would not be able to be sold, traded or transferred.
6. The intellectual property of the Geographical Name would remain the property of the State or Territory whilst the Community Portal Website Committee would be custodian of the Community Domain Name, both at the discretion of *auDA* and the relevant Geographical Names Board/Naming Committee.
7. If the Community Portal Website Committee had reason to dispose of the name, the name would be placed back on the "Reserved List".

Attachment B

**What is OCOS?**

OCOS or One City One Site is a community based working party that was formed in November 2000 in response to community concern over commercial misuse of community (geographic) names, as web addresses, on the internet in Australia.

OCOS is made up of about 7 community members who donate their time to this cause and continue to lobby to protect communities.

How does this effect you?

How would you feel if your community was being held to ransom by entities who use your name for their own interests and/or selling the name to the highest bidder when they've finished with it?

Would you want just anyone being able to use your community, town or suburb name for the Internet with inappropriate content?

Before community names were reserved (due to the work of lobby groups like OCOS) some names were snapped up by single entities. One example was Canberra.com.au.

An example of what can go wrong:

In the case of Canberra.com.au, a pornography company registered the site and naturally published their organisation's materials to the web using that site address. Visitors or any other person searching for information on Canberra, were confronted with a porn site when searching for information on the community.

Members of the Canberra community were so outraged that they lobbied government to do something about it. The government lobbied the company. In order to resolve the issue the government ended up having to pay an exorbitant amount of money to buy the registered website name. Would you want this for all other Australian communities including your community?

Think about the impact of this in our digital age, where the internet is a household item where everyone accesses their information and communication...

think about preserving your Community in this domain before it is too late.

Community will always be important.

Make sure you strengthen and support your community by supporting the reservation of Community names for Community use on the Internet

How can OCOS resolve this?

OCOS has developed a model which ensures community domain (internet) names are reserved for community use only. The suggested format for these community web addresses, is the exact address of the community – the geographic location.

For example: If the community was Bathurst (the town) that's a town is in NSW (the state) which is in the country Australia (.au). so the web address would be: **www.bathurst.nsw.au**

Every community could have their town address as their website address: **www.town.state.au** or **www.town.territory.au**

In addition to this, OCOS also suggests that a special portal *could* be developed linking all the communities to their state or territory and then to the country at a national level. So one way to enter any community website in Australia could be to go to **www.australia.au**, link to any of the state sites – eg: **www.nsw.au** and then select any community in the state.

You don't get any more logical than a web address being exactly the same a physical mailing or geographic location – it makes the model simple, very effective and easy for all members of the community to understand and access.

It is important to remember that all communities may not want a website at this stage, and that's fine. For the community's protection, OCOS suggests that all community names should be reserved until/if the time comes that they want to develop a website for their community.

Visit: www.onecityonesite.org for more information on the model and on OCOS

What can you do to preserve your community's name?

Ever thought a problem was so big, that you felt there was nothing you could do? Well, this time you can. OCOS was originally formed by one person who wanted to make a difference, that person asked others to join and now you, as another single individual, can help with one single small action...

By sending a letter of support (we've even drafted a couple of letters you can use if you're not sure where to start with your letter).

Or

Lodging your support on the One City One Site website: **www.onecityonesite.org**

Send your support, for your community, to arrive by no later than 28th May 2002.

Send to:

**Natasha McGuire
Convener
One City One Site
c/- OIT, Queens Square,
Level 3
1 Prince Albert Road
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