



27 July 2022

The Hon. Bruce Billson

Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman

By email to: [advocacy@asbfeo.gov.au](mailto:advocacy@asbfeo.gov.au)

Dear Mr Billson,

### **Introduction of the .au domain**

On behalf of the Institute of Public Accountants I submit our views on the questions raised in your email on the *Introduction of the .au domain*.

**1. What do you think the level of awareness of this change and its consequences is among your members?**

Extremely low awareness among members and insufficient time left to act to protect the businesses brand and identity.

The consequences of not registering your existing business name by the 20 September 2022 deadline could be commercially disastrous for a business if a rival or other business took their equivalent .au domain name.

The IPA is particularly concerned about the lack of time left to register the equivalent .au domain name before it becomes available to the general public. Our concerns can be summarised as:

- Lack of small business awareness of this change, and what actions need to be taken to protect their interests;
- opportunistic domain name 'squatting' risks forcing smaller enterprises into paying handsomely to 'recover' their domain name;
- scope for ambush marketing to the detriment of small businesses is significantly increased; and
- it is unclear how well-equipped dispute resolution process is to handle disputes that will inevitably arise about who has a legitimate claim on contested domain names.

When this was announced, the IPA put out a news story in our fortnightly newsletter to members using the communication piece issued by ACSC. We will re-run the communication to our members until the current 20 September 2022 deadline. Also, Accountants Daily ran a story on this at the time and we have contacted them to ask for a



re-run of the story to increase awareness amongst practitioners who are key advisers for small business sector. This important news item was [published](#) again on 27 July 2022.

**2. Do you think promotion of this change has been adequate?**

No. There should have been more reminders but also, communication of the reasons for the change, the costs and the consequences. The cost is just another impost on small business and the timing is not ideal for our practitioner members who have been struggling with a backlog of financial and tax year end commitments. Our members have been under significant pressure, specifically, managing the financial impacts of the pandemic for their clients through the plethora of government initiatives and continuing with ongoing support, to return their client's business to sustainable levels over the past two years.

**3. Would it be helpful to extend the deadline?**

Unequivocally yes. If this is not done, then there is potential for huge consequences for unsuspecting small businesses.

**4. Do you/your members have an understanding of auDA's dispute resolution process if there is disagreement about the registration of domain names?**

No, based on response to question 1. The AUDA.org.au website does have information on this, but it should be more prominent.

If you would like to discuss our comments, please do not hesitate to contact Tony Greco at [tony.greco@publicaccountants.org.au](mailto:tony.greco@publicaccountants.org.au) or on 0419 369 038.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Conway FIPA FFA

Chief Executive Officer

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