



## New generic top level domains [gTLDs]

Domain names (such as [www.dbcde.gov.au](http://www.dbcde.gov.au)) have become an important part of our daily lives. They help us to easily remember particular websites and sometimes tell us about the owner of a domain or where it is hosted.

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) is the international body responsible for the coordination of the global Domain Name System.

One of ICANN's jobs is to manage a list of 'top level domains'. A top level domain is the last part of a domain name, after the last period ('.')

There are two sorts:

- > Two-letter country code top level domains for countries and territories, such as **.au** for Australia. For example, in **www.australia.gov.au** the top level domain is **.au**.
- > Generic top level domains (gTLDs), such as **.com** or **.net**. In **www.australia.com** the top level domain is **.com**. At the moment, there are 22 gTLDs.

While gTLDs such as **.com** are sometimes associated with the United States of America, they are intended for use by anyone.

The operators of gTLDs set the registration policies for their gTLDs. For example, the operator of **.museum** has decided that only museums can have a domain name in **.museum**. However, the operator of **.com** allows anybody to register a **.com** domain name.

### ICANN's plan

ICANN has developed a process to allow any organisation to operate its own gTLD. This could lead to the introduction of many different new gTLDs, not just the familiar **.com**, **.org** or **.net**. You could eventually see domain names ending with words like **.movie**, brand names like **.canon**, or even city names like **.paris**.

ICANN has developed rules for new gTLDs. For example, it would not allow **.com** because that looks too much like **.com** and may create confusion.

ICANN plans to publish all valid new gTLD applications on its website. This will allow people to raise any concerns about an application with ICANN, or object if they think an application could infringe on their rights.



## What does this mean for me?

The way that many people interact with the internet may change. More gTLDs might lead to cheaper domain names, enhanced opportunities for business branding, better web services and the introduction of gTLDs in Chinese, Arabic or other scripts.

While ICANN has worked to minimise any risks from the new gTLD program, there are some possible effects. For example:

- > Some brand owners may need to spend more time and money protecting their trade marks in each new gTLD.
- > The change may confuse some users. For example, XYZ Bank may have the domain **www.XYZ.com**, but not **www.XYZ.bank**.
- > Disputes may occur over who should run a top level domain. For example, both XYZ Cars and ABC Cars may want to run the **.cars** gTLD.
- > As a new gTLD could use any word, it is possible that some proposed new gTLDs could offend some people.

## How can I find out more?

ICANN has developed a rule book for new gTLDs, the Applicant Guidebook, which is available at [www.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtld-program.htm](http://www.icann.org/en/topics/new-gtld-program.htm). Also available at that page is more detailed information about the new gTLD program, including how to apply for a gTLD and answers to frequently asked questions. Applications for new gTLDs are expected to open in January 2012, and close in April 2012.

## The Australian Government's role

The Australian Government participates in the ICANN process through the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC).

The GAC provides advice to ICANN, but ICANN's Board of Directors is ultimately in charge of what the organisation does.

Under ICANN's rules, the Australian Government's support will be required for applications for some types of geographic names, such as Australian city names.

The Australian Government will continue to work to ensure that the Australian community is aware of the new gTLD process, and to minimise any risks associated with new gTLDs. If you have questions or comments about ICANN's proposal or the government's role, please send an email to [newgTLDs@DBCDE.gov.au](mailto:newgTLDs@DBCDE.gov.au) or write to by post to:

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