

ICANN Opens New gTLD Application Window, Australian Brands Urged to Consider Their Digital Future

The internet's biggest naming expansion in more than a decade is now officially underway, with ICANN opening applications for the 2026 New Generic Top-Level Domain (gTLD) Program.

For the first time since 2012, organisations have the rare opportunity to apply for and operate their own top-level domain from a dedicated brand string to entirely new category namespaces reflecting the digital economy of 2026.

The application window opened on 30 April 2026 and closes on 12 August 2026.

The 2012 round attracted 1,930 applications worldwide and reshaped the domain landscape with extensions including .shop, .app, .xyz and .melbourne, alongside dedicated dot-brand domains for organisations such as .google, .apple and .canon.

The 2026 round arrives in a fundamentally different internet era. Concepts that didn't exist in 2013, autonomous AI agents, decentralised finance, digital assets, robotics, are now commercial realities, and analysts expect strong demand for strings including .crypto, .agentic, .defi, .quantum and .robots, alongside values-aligned strings such as .climate and .sustainable.

The Australian Opportunity

For Australian organisations, the 2026 round arrives at a compelling moment. A generation of innovative Australian brands, businesses and platforms that simply didn't exist thirteen years ago are now looking to initiatives like the new gTLD program to establish a definitive presence on the internet on their own terms, under their own namespace.

"Australian brands have built some remarkable businesses over the past decade. We've seen companies like Atlassian, Canva, Afterpay and Culture Kings scale from local operations to significant global enterprises in the time since the last round opened.

This program is an opportunity for organisations of that calibre, or those with ambitions to become leaders in their space, to claim their place at the very top level of the internet.

The new gTLD program is a serious investment. The application fee alone sits at USD \$225,000, and total costs including technical, legal and operational requirements can run considerably higher.

But for the right organisation, the upside is significant. A brand that owns its own top-level domain controls every address beneath it, can create entirely new digital experiences, and holds a piece of internet infrastructure that no competitor can replicate or imitate."

Joe Thymian, General Manager, Brandsec



Australian boards should be considering several strategic questions now:

- Should we secure our brand as a top-level domain?
- Is there a commercial opportunity in owning a category namespace in AI or digital assets?
- Does controlling digital trust infrastructure improve our cyber resilience?
- Could a competitor — or a bad actor — move first?

Preparation involves legal review, trademark assessment, registry operator selection, and application preparation under ICANN's updated framework, which places greater emphasis on operational maturity and long-term compliance than the 2012 process.

About Brandsec

Brandsec is Australia's leading domain name management partner, assisting some of Australia's largest brands to manage and protect their domain name portfolios. With deep expertise across domain security, brand protection and the global domain name system, Brandsec helps organisations across the Asia-Pacific region navigate an increasingly complex digital landscape.

About the New gTLD Program

The New gTLD Program is operated by ICANN, the global body responsible for coordinating the internet's domain name system. The 2026 round is expected to be one of the most significant digital naming events of the decade.

Media Contact

Joe Thymian

General Manager, Brandsec

P: 03 7000 4675 • E: info@brandsec.com.au • W: www.brandsec.com.au
