

The Internet Society of Australia (ISOC-AU) welcomes this opportunity to provide comments on the ICANN's Independent Review of the At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC).

The framework for the Review was to consider two main issues: whether there was a continuing purpose for ALAC and whether there should be a change to ALAC's structure or operations to improve its effectiveness.

ISOC-AU strongly supports the need for a continuing and effective Internet user voice in ICANN. The structure of that user voice must support effective communications both within ICANN and between ICANN and the wider Internet community.

The Review considered several possible changes to the way that the user voice is included in ICANN's structure. ISOC-AU agrees with the reasons given by the Review for not proceeding with any of the proposed structural changes and supports the continuation of ALAC's existing role in ICANN.

The Review also considers a number of ways in which the operations of the ALAC might be changed to improve its effectiveness. It should be noted at this stage that ALAC, in its current structure, has existed for only a year and it is to be expected that its processes could be improved. ISOC-AU's response to the Review's specific recommendations for changes in ALAC processes are as follows:

That the number of NomCom appointees to the ALAC should be increased from five to seven, and that this structure should specifically be revisited at the next triennial review taking account of the then existing Geographic Regional Structure of ICANN

ISOC-AU notes that while the Asia-Pacific RALO is only one of the five Regional At-Large Organisations, it represents 60% of the world's population. While the Review's recommendation may not be the only (or best) way to address this regional imbalance. ICANN should take steps to ensure that representation of the RALOs more nearly represents the population of Internet users.

Some recommendations were for changes to the existing structure of ALAC and the Regional At-Large Organisations (RALOs). These include:

- That the ALAC continue to appoint a Liaison to the Board, and that this person should not be a member of the Board with voting rights (i.e. no change from the current position)***
- That the role and continuation of the RALOs should be reconsidered at the next review of the ALAC, with a view to***

- simplifying the complex structure by which individual Internet users can participate.*
- *That the ALAC should explore ways to differentiate between organizations that genuinely represent individual Internet users, and are therefore ALS candidates, as opposed to those which may be a better fit with the NCUC.*

The existing structure of the RALOs and ALAC provides for communication within each RALO, and communication between the RALOs and ALAC. However, the structure of ICANN and user involvement in ICANN is both confusing and complex, and ISOC-AU would strongly support any review that clarifies and simplifies the way that the Internet user can participate in ICANN processes.

One of the suggestions made to this Review was for ALAC to merge with the Non Commercial Users Constituency (NCUC) – one of the member groups within the Generic Names Supporting Organisation (GNSO). Because the GNSO has voting rights on the ICANN Board (along with the other Supporting Organisations), this would give users a vote on the Board.

This proposal highlights one difficulty with the existing structure: the difference between Non-Commercial Users and At-Large Structures and the role each plays is not clear. ISOC-AU would support any moves to reconsider the definition and roles of both the NCUC and ALAC in representing Internet users.

Another difficulty with the suggestion is that, if ALAC merged with the NCUC, the user voice would only be represented within the GNSO, and not within either the Address Supporting Organisation (that represents the RIRs) or the Country Code Names Supporting Organisations. Further, under general governance principles, Board members must represent the interests of the organisation as a whole rather than any particular viewpoint. If ALAC becomes a member of the Board through its merger with NCUC, it would be under such a duty and not able to represent the wider interests of the user community. Therefore, ISOC-AU agrees with the Review's recommendation that ALAC continue to appoint a liaison person to the Board rather than become a Board member.

A number of recommendations were made to enhance/support greater communication within the ALAC community and between ALAC and the wider community of Internet users including:

- *ALAC use of tools for collaboration including lists, wikis and other web based tools*
- *Development of a multi-lingual guide to ICANN and ALAC, and further development of language and translation policies*

- ***Development of processes for engagement of the Internet community in policy debates***

ISOC-AU supports any and all reforms that enhance communications within the ALAC community, and better engage the wider Internet community in policy discussions, particularly participation of non-English speaking communities.

Other recommendations propose administrative reforms that include clearer planning processes, clearer administrative processes for decision making, further administrative processes for issues such as staffing, travel, etc.

To the extent that the proposed reforms enhance ALAC's performance of its core objectives, particularly the participation of Internet users, ISOC-AU supports the recommendations, within the normal constraints of the efficient use of ICANN resources.