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TRANSCRIPT

Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman Bruce Billson interview with Selina Green.

ABC Radio South East SA

Subject: Internet domain name changes

Selina Green

If you're someone who owns and operates a small business, there's a good chance these days you have a website for that business. Do you know if your website address is secure? Do you know that it may be used by another similar service or, worse, a cybercriminal or impersonator taking your website name? Well, the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman is warning small businesses that there is a little bit of time left to take action to avoid your internet identity being sold to someone else.

Bruce Billson is the Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman. Thanks for your time this morning.

Bruce Billson

Selina, fab to be with you and how good's that Elton John remake?

Selina Green

I like it. I know there's some people who just say don't touch those songs...

Bruce Billson

It did percolate a little bit of rhythm in the old boy. It was great.

It is an interesting time. We're less than a week to go until the 20th of September. That's a really critical day because that's the window within which people with existing domain names - you know the longer version might be selina.com.au or selina.net.au or something like that - can simply get selina.au

So, take the com, take the net out, some think it's a little more funky, but the opportunity for you to get the shortened version of a domain name you currently have as a priority allocation process, that runs out next Tuesday. And I'm just urging Australian small and family businesses that don't want to see someone possibly get your domain name in a shortened version and have your interest not protected because of it. I'm urging them to spend a moment to think, is this something I want to secure, even as a defensive position to make sure no one else gets it given there is this priority allocation window.

Selina Green

Right. So, if you've got that name, say, isellgreatplants.com.au or whatever, you're not necessarily going to get the shortened version because you already have that. That is a process you have to actually go through.

Bruce Billson

That's correct. You need to apply. So, I mean, the thinking behind this and it's happening in some other countries is a few more domain names might be a good thing and some people particularly accessing websites via mobile devices, perhaps a shortened domain name could be a good thing. So that's the sort of logic that sits around it.

But more immediate, though, is the concern that, you know, you've invested in building up your digital identity, you've got your key channel to your customers, might be your website, and all of a sudden the domain name, that shortened version that might well be confused or intentionally masquerading as your domain name, might get in the way of your business plans, of your relationship with customers.

You can reserve those as a priority allocation where it's like-for-like minus that little .com, .net bit for domain names you currently have. But that window shuts on the 20th September Selina.

Selina Green

So, there may be some unscrupulous operators out there who perhaps see this as an opportunity to swoop in and get some of these domain names beforehand and use that to their advantage.

Bruce Billson

It's as almost as predictable as it being glorious in Mount Gambier that will happen because it already happens now. I mean even with the longer versions you see, you know, they call themselves entrepreneurs going around grabbing domain names that might look very much like or might even be the Australian version of a domain name used internationally where a firm might want to come to Australia or someone who's just trying to be a little too cute, a little too sharp, trying to emulate a successful website by a very similar domain name.

So that happens already. And as the Australian Cyber Security Centre said, this is a time to be very alert because opportunistic cyber criminals could register your .au domain name and attempt to impersonate your business with that shortened version. We're saying don't be caught short by these shortened domain name versions. Protect your interest and secure them if that's important to you.

Selina Green

Right. So that process, that's relatively simple? Where does that start?

Bruce Billson

People who have currently got a domain name, will have a domain name administrator operating to secure that name for them. You can go back through that domain name administrator or wholesaler, I should say, like GoDaddy, those sorts of things. You can reserve them through that. Or if you've got some I.T. people helping you, they'll be able to step you through that.

So, it's not an expensive step. I mean, they can be as little as \$8, \$9, maybe a bit more, depending on who you buy them through. But it does take time, a few minutes to do that. And more

particularly, it's worth thinking about whether those moments, those few dollars spent now are so much better than if someone went and copied your website, got all your customers and had a really profound impact on your business in the longer term.

Selina Green

Yeah, good point, Bruce Billson thanks so much for joining us today.

Bruce Billson

Great to chat, Selina. Thanks for your interest.

Selina Green

Bruce Billson, there. He is Australia's Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman. So, if this could potentially impact you as a small business owner and operator, you've got until next Tuesday, the 20th of September, to make that step to register the equivalent .au name before it becomes available to the general public to purchase. So, get in there and get that done. As Bruce Billson said, it could save you a lot of pain and trouble down the track.