

Edwards Property

HOBART CATCHMENT ANALYSIS REPORT

Business and Employment Change in Six Greater Hobart Catchments, 2011 to 2025

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Turning Data into Solutions



Key Findings

- Estimated employment in Hobart's central catchment has fallen by around 9,500 jobs since 2011, a decline of 31 per cent.
- Financial and Insurance Services businesses in Hobart's central catchment have almost halved, from 416 in 2011 to 220 in 2025 (down 47 per cent).
- Retail Trade businesses in Hobart's central catchment have fallen by close to a quarter (down 24.6 per cent).
- The number of medium-sized employers (20 to 199 staff) in Hobart's central catchment has dropped by a third, from 302 to 202.
- Registered business counts across the wider study area grew 36 per cent outside the Hobart catchment, but only 7.5 per cent within it.

1. Background

Spectrum Analysis Australia was engaged by Edwards Property to analyse business and employment change in six commercial catchments around Greater Hobart over the 15 years from 2011 to 2025, drawing on annual data from successive releases of the ABS Counts of Australian Businesses publication (ABS, 2012; ABS, 2025a). The engagement was prompted by differing public characterisations of the trend: business community representatives have argued that the relevant areas have gone backwards in terms of established employing businesses, while some stakeholders have cited rising registered business counts as evidence of growth. This report tests both positions against the data, documents the methodology and assumptions in full, and stress-tests the headline finding under the three multiplier scenarios.

2. Findings

Both characterisations are partially correct but they measure different things. Registered business counts have risen in every catchment over the period, by an aggregate 24.7 per cent across the six catchments. This reflects strong growth in non-employing businesses, primarily sole traders and contractors who hold an Australian Business Number but employ no staff. At the same time, estimated employment by employing businesses has fallen by approximately 5,400 jobs across the study area (central estimate, equivalent to a 9.3 per cent decline), with Hobart catchment accounting for almost all of the loss at approximately 9,500 jobs (-31.2 per cent). The divergence reflects a compositional shift: non-employing businesses grew by 33.7 per cent and businesses with 1 to 4 employees by 31.6 per cent across the study area, while businesses with 20 to 199 employees, the size class most associated with anchor commercial tenancies, contracted by 26.2 per cent. The choice of measure matters substantially for the policy question being asked.

Registered business counts have risen in every catchment, but estimated employment has fallen sharply in Hobart

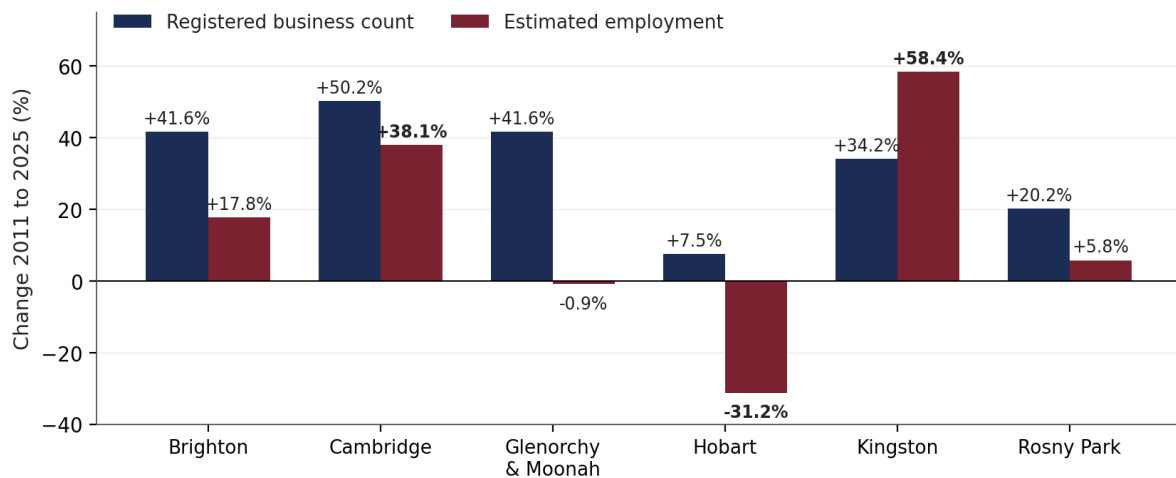


Figure 1. Change in registered business count and estimated employment by catchment, 2011 to 2025, Central scenario. Source: ABS cat. 8165.0; Spectrum Analysis calculations

3. Catchment-level findings

Aggregate change masks substantial variation. Cambridge, Brighton, Kingston and Rosny Park each recorded gains in both registered businesses and estimated employment. Glenorchy and Moonah grew strongly in business count (+41.6 per cent) but is effectively flat on estimated employment (-0.9 per cent), reflecting a compositional shift toward smaller businesses. Hobart catchment is the clear outlier on both measures: a small gain in registered businesses (+7.5 per cent) accompanies the largest absolute loss of estimated employment in the study area (-9,528 jobs, or -31.2 per cent of 2011 levels).

Catchment	Biz 2011	Biz 2025	Biz % chg	Emp 2011	Emp 2025	Emp % chg
Brighton	406	575	+41.6%	1,423	1,675	+17.8%
Cambridge	691	1,038	+50.2%	2,945	4,068	+38.1%
Glenorchy and Moonah	1,629	2,307	+41.6%	13,280	13,158	-0.9%
Hobart	3,445	3,704	+7.5%	30,533	21,005	-31.2%
Kingston	1,301	1,746	+34.2%	4,380	6,940	+58.4%
Rosny Park	1,138	1,368	+20.2%	5,633	5,960	+5.8%
Study area total	8,610	10,738	+24.7%	58,193	52,805	-9.3%

Table 1. Registered business counts and estimated employment by catchment, 2011 to 2025. Source: ABS cat. 8165.0; Spectrum Analysis Central scenario calculations

4. Industry Composition

The decline is concentrated in industries traditionally associated with anchor commercial centres. Retail Trade (ANZSIC G) contracted by 16.4 per cent (-138 businesses) across the six catchments and Financial and Insurance Services (ANZSIC K) by 39.0 per cent (-269 businesses). The largest single industry decline is Hobart catchment Financial and

Insurance Services, which fell from 416 businesses in 2011 to 220 in 2025 (-47.1 per cent), reflecting branch consolidation by banks, insurers and brokers. Hobart Retail Trade contracted by 24.6 per cent (-93 businesses) over the same period. By contrast, Accommodation and Food Services grew by 35.9 per cent (+193) and Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services by 24.8 per cent (+224), reflecting the broader shift in commercial activity toward hospitality and property services.

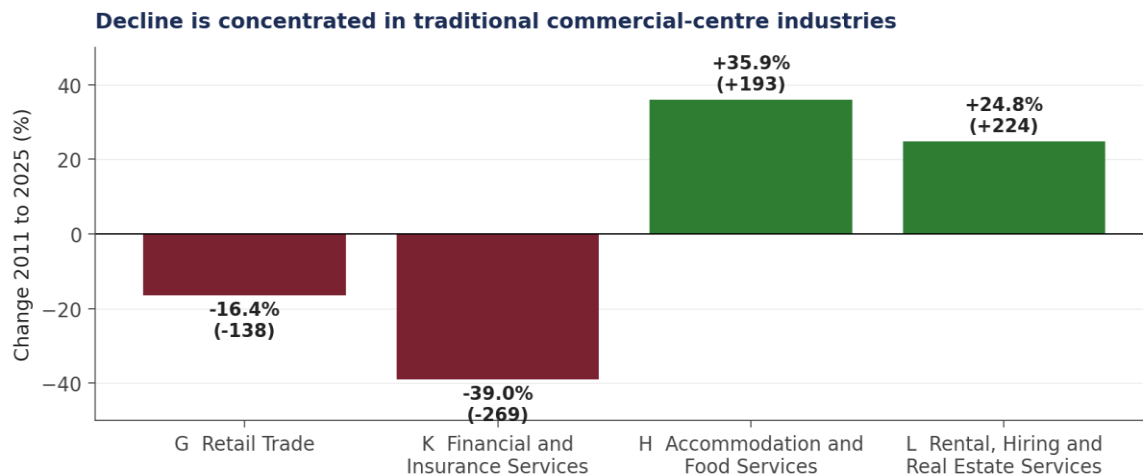


Figure 2. Per cent change in business counts in four selected ANZSIC industry divisions, study area total, 2011 to 2025. Source: ABS cat. 8165.0.

5. Methodology

5.1. Data source and geography

All business count data is sourced from the ABS publication Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits (catalogue 8165.0). The data spans the 15 years from June 2011 to June 2025, drawn from successive annual releases (ABS, 2012, for the 2011 data point through to ABS, 2025a, for the most recent). Counts are compiled from the Australian Business Register and include businesses actively trading on the reference date. Employment size ranges are derived by the ABS using Business Activity Statement wages and salaries information combined with ABS business survey data (ABS, 2019). Data was extracted at the Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2) geography and cross-classified by 19 ANZSIC 2006 industry divisions and five employment size bands (Non employing, 1 to 4, 5 to 19, 20 to 199, 200+). Catchment boundaries were specified by Edwards Property and built from constituent SA2s. The six catchments comprise 14 SA2s in total: Brighton (Bridgewater - Gagebrook, Brighton - Pontville); Cambridge (Cambridge); Glenorchy and Moonah (Derwent Park - Lutana, Glenorchy, Moonah, West Moonah); Hobart (Hobart, West Hobart); Kingston (Kingston - Huntingfield, Kingston Beach - Blackmans Bay); Rosny Park (Bellerive - Rosny, Lindisfarne - Rose Bay, Mornington - Warrane).

5.2. Employment estimation

Because Counts of Australian Businesses does not publish total employment at SA2 level, employment was estimated by multiplying business counts in each size band by an average employees per business multiplier and summing across bands. Central scenario multipliers are calibrated against ABS Australian Industry (cat. 8155.0), Table 5, May 2025

release, which publishes total employment by business employment range for selected private sector industries (ABS, 2025b). National averages are derived by dividing employment in each band by the business count in that band.

Size band	Central	Sens. range	Basis
Non employing	0	0	Zero by definition (no payroll employees). Working owner-operators excluded to align with the ABS payroll-derived measure and keep the headline conservative.
1 to 4 employees	2.5	2.0 - 3.0	Band midpoint. Distribution heavily skewed toward 1 to 2 person businesses; about three quarters of businesses in this band are at the lower end.
5 to 19 employees	10	9.0 - 12.0	Band midpoint. ABS Australian Industry 2023-24 implies a national average of approximately 9.0 (2,206,400 employees in ~245,000 businesses).
20 to 199 employees	50	40 - 60	ABS Australian Industry 2023-24 implies a national average of approximately 49.7 (3,375,000 in 67,857 businesses). Right-skewed toward lower end of band.
200 or more employees	500	300 - 875	ABS Australian Industry 2023-24 implies a national average of approximately 875 (4,656,400 in 5,322 businesses). Central set below national average for conservatism since band is unbounded above and may include very large public-sector employers whose attribution to specific catchments is uncertain.

Table 2. Employment multipliers, Central scenario and sensitivity range. Sources: ABS, Counts of Australian Businesses (cat. 8165.0); ABS, Australian Industry (cat. 8155.0) Table 5, May 2025; ASBFEO Small Business Data Portal (ASBFEO, 2025).

5.3. Sensitivity Testing

The headline finding was tested across the full range of multipliers in Table 2. Under the Conservative scenario the study area records an estimated 4,225 job decline and Hobart catchment a 6,752 job decline. Under the Upper scenario the figures are 6,465 and

13,908 respectively. The direction of decline is robust across all three scenarios for both the study area as a whole and Hobart catchment specifically.

6. Limitations

- **Estimation, not measurement.** The employment figure is derived from business counts and average multipliers; actual employment will differ from the estimate. Sensitivity analysis quantifies the uncertainty.
- **National-average multipliers.** Central multipliers reflect national averages applied uniformly across catchments and years. Within-band averages vary by location and over time.
- **200+ band uncertainty.** The band is unbounded above, contains fewer than 25 businesses across the study area, and in a state-capital catchment may include very large public-sector employers (hospital, university, government departments). Changes in this band have outsized impact. The Central multiplier of 500 is deliberately conservative.
- **Non-employing businesses excluded.** Central scenario assumes zero employees for non-employing businesses by design. Working owner-operators of sole-trader and contractor businesses are not counted. This produces a narrower measure of employment than the ABS Census Place of Work would capture.
- **ABS confidentiality perturbation.** Small discrepancies between cell totals and sums of components are expected in ABS small-area data and have not been adjusted. Mid-series annual values are indicative; the 2011 to 2025 endpoint comparison is the most reliable measure.
- **Census Place of Work not used.** The ABS Census Place of Work release is the gold-standard small-area employment measure (directly measured job counts by SA2 for Census years 2011, 2016, 2021). This analysis uses the multiplier-based approach to maintain a full annual time series, with the trade-off acknowledged.

7. Implications and Considerations

The public characterisation of business change in Greater Hobart depends materially on the choice of measure. A count of registered businesses provides a misleading picture of commercial-centre vitality because it includes large numbers of non-employing operators whose activity does not anchor employment, premises or commercial-centre amenity in the same way as established employing businesses. A measure of jobs supported by employing businesses, even when conservatively estimated, indicates substantial decline in Hobart catchment specifically.

Considerations for stakeholders receiving this analysis:

- Where business count metrics are used to monitor commercial-centre health, complementary measures of employment, employing-business counts or industry mix should be considered alongside.
- The decline in Retail Trade and Financial and Insurance Services in Hobart catchment reflects broader patterns of branch consolidation in financial services and online retail substitution that have affected commercial centres across Australia.

- Hobart catchment specifically warrants closer examination. Businesses with 20 to 199 employees fell from 302 to 202 over the period, a one-third decline in the size class that anchors mid-tier commercial tenancies.

8. References

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About the author and Spectrum Analysis Australia

Peter Buckingham is Managing Director of Spectrum Analysis Australia, a specialist consultancy providing geodemographic analysis, catchment modelling and territory planning services to retail, franchise, industry and community-sector clients across Australia and internationally. Peter has 30+ years of experience in retail catchment analysis and location intelligence, and has led Spectrum's engagements with national retailers, franchise networks, industry associations and community-sector organisations. He is a regular commentator on trends in retail catchments, franchise systems and demographic trends.

Spectrum Analysis Australia has been advising Australian and international clients on commercial and community-sector location decisions for 30+ years. The company is based in Surrey Hills, Victoria.

Media enquiries

Peter Buckingham

Managing Director, Spectrum Analysis Australia

Phone: +61 3 9830 0077

Email: spectrum@spectrumanalysis.com.au