

**Place AU**

Planning & Investment Intelligence

METHODOLOGY & DATA STATEMENT

Business Investment Report

How the Business Investment Report is built: the sources behind every figure, the calculations applied, the role of AI, and what the report cannot tell you.

DOCUMENT

Methodology & Data
Statement v1.0

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01 Purpose of this statement

This statement sets out how the Business Investment Report is built: where every figure comes from, how it is calculated, what role artificial intelligence plays, and what the product cannot tell you. It is written so that a business owner, investor, council officer or site selector can assess the method before relying on the output, and so that any figure in a delivered report can be traced back to a named public source.

Place AU publishes this statement because a report is only as useful as the confidence you can place in it. Where a method involves a judgement, that judgement is named here rather than buried. Where a limit exists, it is stated rather than glossed.

STATUS OF THIS DOCUMENT

This is a methodology statement, not a warranty of outcome and not professional advice. It describes the process Place AU follows. It does not guarantee that any particular decision made in reliance on a report will be correct. Section 09 sets out the limits of the product and Section 10 explains how errors are corrected.

02 What this product is, and what it is not

The Business Investment Report is a structured read on a single Australian geography, either one small area or a whole local government area, built to answer one question: is this location worth backing, and why. It covers the resident catchment and its demographic profile, income and affluence, workforce and industry including which sectors are over or under represented against the state pattern, a named peer comparison, housing and tenure, a SWOT with a direct assessment, and a statement of what the evidence cannot tell you.

WHAT IT IS NOT

- It is not a valuation, and it does not price any property or business.
- It is not a feasibility study or a business plan.
- It is not site-specific due diligence. It describes a geography, not a parcel. Planning controls at a specific address are covered by the Development Alignment Brief.
- It does not observe commercial rents, foot traffic, competitor mix or retail vacancy. No national statistical series publishes these at this geography, so the report says so rather than estimating them.
- It is not financial product advice, and it does not recommend a transaction.
- It is not a substitute for professional advice. It is a sourced starting point.

03 Geography and boundaries

Geography is resolved to official Australian Bureau of Statistics boundaries under the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) 2021, Edition 3, the same boundaries the ABS itself publishes statistics against. This matters because a suburb name is not a statistical unit: matching a name to the wrong boundary is the most common way place-based analysis goes quietly wrong.

- **Small area reports** resolve to one ABS Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2) and report at that level.
- **LGA reports** resolve to the ABS Local Government Area boundary and profile every SA2 inside it, so opportunity can be compared between parts of one council area.

SMALL AREA NAMES ARE NOT SUBURB NAMES

SA2 names are set by the ABS and frequently differ from the suburb name in common use, for example **Kew – West** rather than Kew. The report names the area and its ASGS code on the cover so there is no ambiguity about which area was purchased. Where a marketed suburb name and the ABS boundary do not coincide, the ABS boundary governs and the report says so.

Coverage is national, spanning 2,473 small areas and the 546 local government areas of every state and territory. Special-purpose ASGS areas such as Migratory and No usual address carry no resident population and are excluded.

Where a figure is only published at a coarser geography than the one being discussed, it is reported at the geography it was published for and labelled accordingly. A published LGA figure is never apportioned to a small area and then presented as a small area figure.

04 Data sources

Every figure in a report is retrieved from one of the sources below. No figure is sourced from a commercial data provider, a proprietary panel, a subscription database or an aggregator, and no figure is estimated by Place AU where a published figure exists.

SOURCE	PUBLISHER	WHAT IT SUPPLIES	LICENCE
ABS Census of Population and Housing 2021	Australian Bureau of Statistics	Population, age structure, household composition, cultural profile, occupation and industry of employment, qualifications, tenure, income distribution	CC BY 4.0
ABS Estimated Resident Population (ERP)	Australian Bureau of Statistics	Current-year population estimates and population change between Census years	CC BY 4.0
ABS Regional Population	Australian Bureau of Statistics	Population and annual growth by area	CC BY 4.0
ABS Data by Region	Australian Bureau of Statistics	Income and economy themes at small area level	CC BY 4.0
ABS Building Approvals	Australian Bureau of Statistics	Dwelling and non-residential approval counts and values, used as a development activity signal	CC BY 4.0
ABS Counts of Australian Businesses	Australian Bureau of Statistics	Actively trading business counts by industry, used for business density	CC BY 4.0
ABS Labour Force	Australian Bureau of Statistics	Participation and employment context above the Census vintage	CC BY 4.0
ABS Personal Income in Australia	Australian Bureau of Statistics	ATO-derived median personal income	CC BY 4.0
ABS SEIFA 2021	Australian Bureau of Statistics	Index of Economic Resources and socio-economic percentile	CC BY 4.0
ABS ASGS 2021, Edition 3	Australian Bureau of Statistics	Boundary geometry for the selected area, its neighbours and its peer sets	CC BY 4.0
DataVic	Victorian Government	Victorian open datasets	CC BY 4.0 (DataVic)
State open data portals	NSW, QLD, SA and WA governments	Equivalent state datasets outside Victoria	Crown copyright, reuse per publisher terms

Licence column records the terms under which Place AU reuses the material. Where a publisher applies Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0), attribution is carried in the report source list. Where a dataset is published under other Crown terms, reuse is limited to what those terms permit. Place AU does not reuse any dataset whose terms prohibit commercial reuse.

SOURCES WE DELIBERATELY EXCLUDE

Place AU does not use commercial demographic providers, automated valuation model outputs, proprietary consumer panels, scraped listing data or third-party aggregators. This is a sourcing rule, not a cost decision. It means the analysis is reproducible by anyone with access to the same public datasets, the sources can be named in a public forum without a licensing dispute, and no figure depends on a commercial arrangement that could lapse.

05 How a report is produced

Place AU follows a retrieve-first architecture. Figures are retrieved from source and validated before any narrative is written. This ordering is the single most important control in the system and the reason the product behaves differently from a general purpose AI assistant asked to write a report.

1. **Geography resolved.** The selected small area or LGA is matched to the official ABS ASGS 2021 boundary geometry before anything else happens, and its ASGS code is recorded.
2. **Data retrieved.** Population, income, workforce, business and growth figures are pulled directly from the sources in Section 04, live, at the time of the request, together with the same figures for the peer sets and the parent area. This happens before any AI is involved.
3. **Figures tagged.** Each figure is tagged Measured where it was published directly, or Derived where Place AU calculated it from published inputs. The count of each appears in the report header.
4. **Figures validated.** Retrieved numbers are checked against each other and against expected ranges. Field names are read case-insensitively because the ABS geospatial services return lowercase field names, a mismatch that would otherwise silently drop a value. Population vintage is auto-detected and the record is stamped with the vintage actually used.
5. **Sources reconciled.** Where two sources publish the same measure with different values, both are retained and the discrepancy is reported rather than one being silently preferred.
6. **Narrative written.** Only once the figures are locked is the model called to write the plain-English interpretation.
7. **Delivered.** The report is issued as a print-ready PDF and an editable Word document, with a copy emailed to the purchaser.

Vintage handling

Every retrieved figure is stamped at runtime with the release or vintage it came from, and that vintage is carried through to the delivered report. Where two figures in a report come from different vintages, both are shown rather than silently harmonised to the newer one.

Failing visibly

If a source cannot be reached or returns an unexpected structure, the pipeline stops and reports the failure. It does not substitute a cached figure, a prior-year figure or an interpolated value. A missing figure appears in the report as missing, with the reason. This is a deliberate trade: an incomplete report is recoverable, a silently stale one is not.

06 Models and calculations

Benchmarking

Headline measures are reported both as a level and as a comparison against a wider geography, because a median income means little without knowing what it is being compared to. Comparators are the relevant Greater Capital City Statistical Area and the state.

BENCHMARK DIFFERENCE

$$\text{difference \%} = (\text{value for the geography} \div \text{value for the comparator} - 1) \times 100$$

Reported alongside both underlying levels, never as a percentage on its own. Both figures are drawn from the same source and the same vintage.

Peer sets

Two peer sets are built and both are named rather than averaged. Structural peers are matched on population size and socio-economic percentile. Market peers are matched on catchment characteristics. Naming them lets a reader challenge the comparison, which an anonymous average does not allow. Where a peer does not publish a measure, the report says so rather than dropping the peer silently.

Industry concentration

LOCATION QUOTIENT

$$LQ = (\text{local industry employment} \div \text{local employment}) \div (\text{state industry employment} \div \text{state employment})$$

A quotient above 1 means the industry employs more people than the state pattern predicts for a workforce of that size. The report also states the implied job difference in whole people, because a ratio alone does not convey scale.

Growth

POPULATION GROWTH OVER A PERIOD

$$\text{growth \%} = (\text{population at end of period} \div \text{population at start of period} - 1) \times 100$$

Calculated on ABS Estimated Resident Population where the period spans Census years. The start and end vintages are both stated in the report. Where the published series does not cover the area, growth is reported as not published rather than estimated.

Business density

BUSINESS DENSITY

$$\text{density} = \text{actively trading businesses} \div (\text{resident population} \div 1,000)$$

Businesses per 1,000 residents, from ABS Counts of Australian Businesses. Where the ABS suppresses a small-area count for confidentiality, the report states that it is suppressed rather than estimating it.

Affordability ratios

Rent to income and mortgage to income are calculated from published median rent, median mortgage repayment and median household income for the same area and the same vintage. Both are tagged Derived.

Percentile ranks

Where a rank is reported it is a percentile across all comparable areas nationally, or within the state where stated. Percentile ranking is used rather than min-max scaling so that a single extreme area cannot flatten the rest of the distribution.

Opportunity ranking

The report ranks business categories by fit for the location. The ranking is a structured comparison of the retrieved indicators against the demand profile of each category. It is a documented design judgement about which indicators matter for which kinds of business, not a statistical prediction, and it is presented as a ranked read rather than a forecast. The indicators behind the ranking are the ones listed in Section 04 and are shown in the report so a reader can see what drove the order.

The Business Match scoring model

Place AU also operates Business Match, a free national screening tool that uses a published weighted model. It is described here because it shares the sourcing discipline and readers often encounter both. Business Match classifies a business against the full ANZSIC 2006 (Revision 2.0) structure, all 19 industry divisions and all 86 subdivisions, then scores areas on seven factors:

FACTOR	SOURCE
Population	ABS Regional Population, latest published annual estimates
Annual growth	ABS Regional Population
Median personal income	ABS Personal Income in Australia, ATO-derived
Economic resources	ABS SEIFA 2021 Index of Economic Resources
Target demographic fit	ABS Census 2021 age structure, matched to the age groups each industry serves
Business density	ABS Counts of Australian Businesses, actively trading businesses per 1,000 residents
Transport access	ABS Census 2021 car-free household share, the share of dwellings with no motor vehicle

WEIGHTED AREA SCORE

score = $\sum$ (normalised factor value × industry weighting for that factor), scaled 0 to 100

Each factor is normalised against the comparison set, multiplied by the weighting for the relevant ANZSIC division or subdivision, and summed. The weightings are a documented design choice per industry. The underlying figures are always real ABS data, never modelled or estimated. Ranks are reported as state-relative percentiles so an area is compared against a like distribution.

WHAT THE SCORE CANNOT SEE

Commercial rents and site costs, same-industry competitor mix at street level, foot traffic and zoning are not in the Business Match score, because no verified government source publishes them at that geography. Land, logistics and resource industries are scored on business ecosystem, workforce and growth rather than consumer demand, and for those industries the score reads as a signal of regional business activity: final site viability additionally depends on land availability, freight corridors, zoning or resource geology, which sit outside any national statistical series.

07 Use of artificial intelligence

AI is used to explain retrieved data in plain English. It is not used to produce, estimate, infer or recall any figure. The distinction is enforced mechanically, not by instruction alone.

What the model does

- Writes the plain-English interpretation of figures that have already been retrieved and validated.
- Structures the narrative into the report's fixed section format, ordering findings by materiality.
- Summarises what a validated figure means for the decision the report supports.

What the model does not do

- It does not generate statistics. Every number in a report enters the process before the model is called and is passed to it as validated input.
- It does not recall figures from its training data. The system prompt prohibits this explicitly, and figures are supplied in the request rather than requested from memory.
- It does not fill a gap where a dataset is unavailable.
- It does not select or rank sources. The source list is fixed by the sourcing policy.
- It does not decide anything about an identified individual.

WHY THE ORDERING MATTERS

The common failure mode in AI-written analysis is asking a model to produce numbers. Models are fluent, so invented figures read as confidently as correct ones, and they drift and date without warning. Place AU removes the failure mode rather than managing it: by the time the model is invoked, the figures are already fixed, sourced and vintage-stamped, and the model's only task is explanation. A model that is never asked for a number cannot fabricate one.

The validation gate

Every figure appearing in generated prose is checked back against the retrieved payload before delivery. A figure that was not supplied to the model causes the report to fail rather than ship. A missing report is recoverable. A plausible wrong one is not.

Human oversight

The Business Investment Report is generated automatically. Human oversight is exercised at the design level rather than per report: the source list, the retrieval logic, the validation rules and the section structure are set and reviewed by Place AU, and the pipeline halts rather than publishing where a validation rule fails. Any report can be reviewed on request.

Model and processing

Narrative generation uses the Anthropic Claude API. Geography and order metadata is passed to the API to generate report content, as disclosed in the Place AU privacy policy. Client material is not used to train models. Payment processing is handled by Stripe and Place AU does not store card details. Report delivery uses Resend. Each of these providers operates under its own privacy policy and some process information outside Australia.

Automated decision-making

Place AU reports are decision-support documents about places, not decisions about people. The product does not make, or substantially assist in making, a decision about an identified individual, and it does not assess, score, rank or profile individuals. Reports are produced from aggregate published statistics.

Place AU notes the automated decision-making transparency obligation inserted into the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) by the Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024 (Cth), which commences on 10 December 2026 and requires affected entities to describe in their privacy policy the kinds of personal information used in, and the kinds of decisions made by, qualifying automated decision-making. Place AU maintains its privacy policy against that obligation.

Regulatory context

Australia does not currently have AI-specific legislation. The National AI Plan released in December 2025 confirmed a technology-neutral approach relying on existing law, supported by the National AI Centre's Guidance for AI Adoption and the Australian AI Safety Institute. Place AU's controls are built to the substance of that guidance: accountability is held by a named person, impacts are assessed, the system is tested and monitored, and human control is retained over what is published.

08 Data governance

Sourcing policy

Reports are built exclusively on open government data licensed for commercial reuse. There are no proprietary data dependencies, which means no figure in a report can become unpublishable because a subscription lapsed or a licensor changed its terms.

Traceability

Every figure can be traced to a named, publicly available source. Source and vintage are stated in the report itself, not held separately. A reader with access to the same public datasets can reproduce the figures.

Accuracy over completeness

Where a figure cannot be sourced, it is omitted and the omission is stated. Place AU does not fill a gap with an estimate presented as a fact. A shorter correct report is preferred to a longer one padded with inference.

Conflicting sources

Where two government sources disagree, Place AU verifies against the primary source and states which was adopted and why. Where a primary source is itself ambiguous or a figure is proposed rather than in force, both readings are named and neither is adopted silently. A cross source reconciliation section in the delivered report records any such conflict.

Suppression

Small-area statistics are sometimes suppressed by the publisher for confidentiality. Where that applies, the report says the figure is suppressed. It is not interpolated, modelled or inferred from a larger geography.

Personal information

Reports are built from aggregate published statistics. They do not contain personal information about identified individuals. Personal information collected from clients is limited to what is needed to scope, deliver and invoice the work, and is handled under the Place AU privacy policy at placeau.com/privacy-policy.

09 Limitations

- **Census vintage.** Core demographic structure comes from the 2021 Census. It is refreshed with current-year ERP, Building Approvals and labour force releases where available, but composition measures such as household type and cultural profile carry the Census vintage and are stated as such.
- **Boundaries are not markets.** A statistical boundary is an administrative line. Trade areas cross it. A small area report describes the resident population of that area, not everyone who shops there.
- **No street-level data.** Rents, vacancy at a specific address, foot traffic and competitor mix by shopfront are not published by any government source at this geography.
- **Growth is not always published.** Areas created or redrawn in ASGS Edition 3 have no earlier series on comparable boundaries, and growth is reported as not published rather than estimated.
- **Industry is divisional.** Business counts are published by ANZSIC division rather than class, so industry presence is a divisional measure and is labelled as such.
- **Suppression.** Small-area counts can be suppressed by the ABS for confidentiality. Suppressed values are reported as suppressed.
- **Not a forecast.** The outlook section reads trajectory from observed data. It does not model future values and does not carry a confidence interval.
- **Decision-support only.** The report supports a decision. It does not make one, and it is not a substitute for professional advice on a specific transaction.

10 Currency, versioning and corrections

Currency

Each Business Investment Report states the vintage of every figure it uses. A report is a point-in-time document. Government sources are revised and reissued, and a figure correct at the date of issue may be superseded later. The report date on the cover is the date the figures were retrieved.

Corrections

If an error is identified in a delivered report, whether by Place AU or by the client, Place AU will verify it against the primary source and, where the error is confirmed, issue a corrected version at no charge, marked with a revision number and a short note describing what changed. Clients are told when a correction affects a figure they may have already relied on or published.

Methodology changes

This statement is versioned. Where a method changes in a way that would alter a previously reported figure, the change is recorded in the version history and clients who received an affected report within the preceding twelve months are notified.

Raising a question

Questions about any figure, source or calculation described here can be sent to info@placeau.com. Place AU will identify the source and the calculation behind any figure in a delivered report on request.