Q3
2025

Adviser Musical Chairs Report

Industry research on financial adviser and licensee movement

This research report offers insights that will help key market players, such as fund managers, super funds, life insurers, platform and software providers, to identify key focus areas to improve sales and marketing strategies. The financial planning and investment advice industry has undergone significant changes over the past ten years with the implementation of the Future of Financial Advice (FOFA) reforms. Financial advisers continuously enter and exit the industry, as well as switch from one licensee to another. This report shows some of Adviser Ratings' analysis and insight into these movements, for the benefit of those providing products and services to the industry.

AR data

Adviser Ratings

Key findings

196	Increase in adviser numbers
184	Number of new advisers who joined the profession
195	Number of advisers who ceased the profession
496	Number of advisers who switched licensees
19	Number of ceased licensees
16	Number of new licensees
10	Reduction in practices

Shaping The Future Of Advice Together In 2026

Australia's most influential financial advice study, the annual Landscape Survey, amplifies advisers' voices to industry decision-makers. This year we're taking the Landscape digital. Complete the survey to gain exclusive adviser insights and the chance to win exciting prizes. And thanks to your feedback, we've shortened the survey to ***just 15 minutes***.

Complete the 2026 Landscape Survey for:

20 x $1,000 Cash Prizes

Win one of twenty $1,000 cash prizes. Our biggest cash giveaway yet and a thank-you to advisers who share their insights in our national survey.

Noosa Luxury Getaway

Win a beachfront 3-night stay for two at the stunning Seahaven Noosa Resort. The perfect Sunshine Coast escape.

Adviser Insights Hub 2026

Access the new digital platform with the nationwide analysis revealing adviser trends and opportunities. Explore the data interactively, anywhere, anytime.

Regional Report 2026

Gain a competitive edge with tailored insights benchmarking your region and peers. Prized by advisers for revealing local trends and dynamics.

31st Jan 2026
Survey close & prize draw

15 minutes
Estimated time to complete

Start the survey →

Executive Summary: A Quarter of Cautious Recovery and Structural Realignment

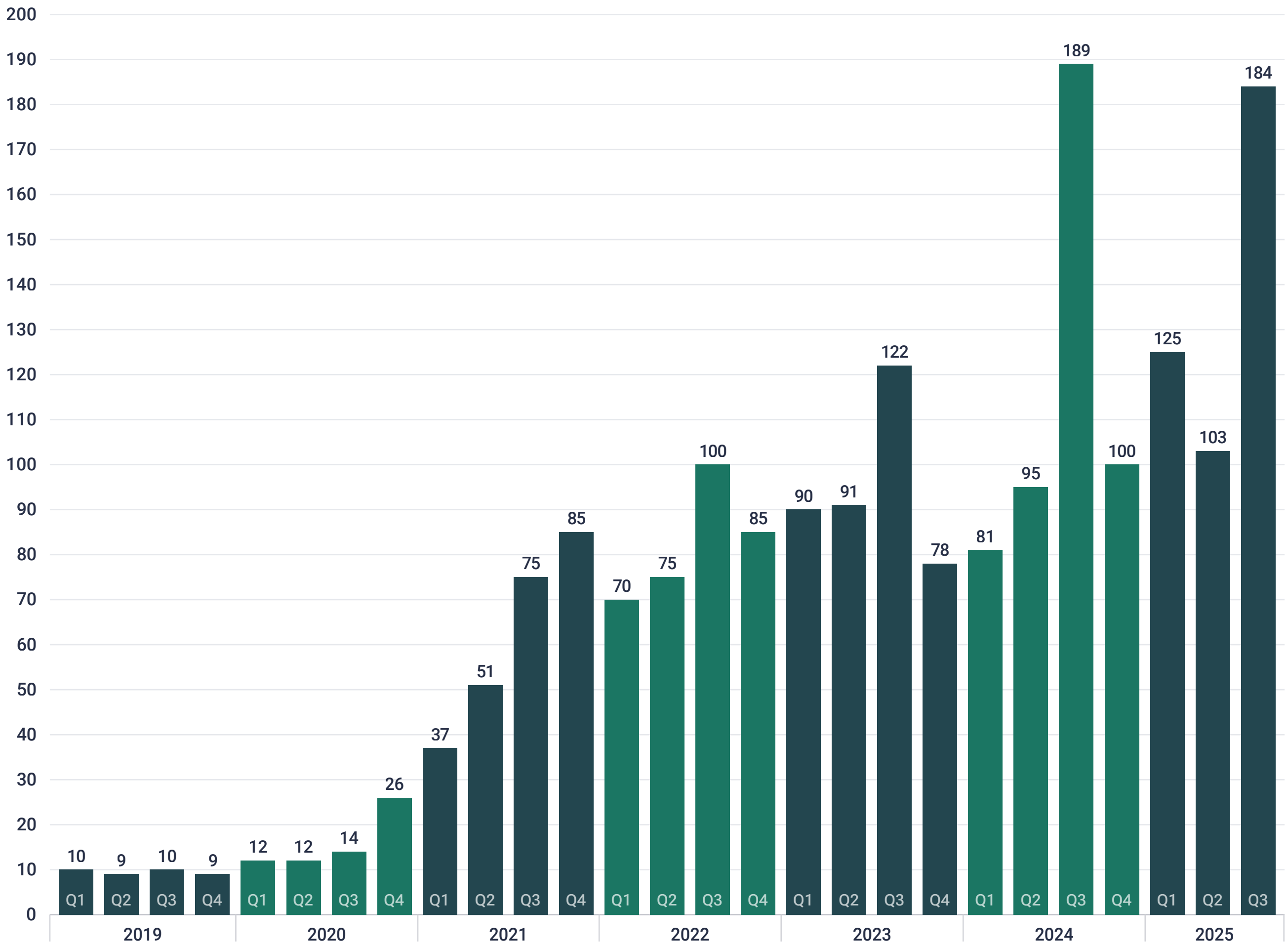
The third quarter of 2025 marked the largest growth period in the net number of practicing advisers since the profession's "ice age" commenced at the end of 2018. The quarter concluded with a total of 15,447 financial advisers, representing a net increase of 196 professionals. The marginal growth was driven by a continued influx of 184 new entrants and a slow down in advisers ceasing. The 195 departures was the lowest since 2018. New returning advisers, who ceased from previous quarters, a typical trend, ensured the highest growth in adviser numbers quarter over quarter in close to seven years.

Beneath this headline figure, the quarter was defined by a palpable tension between this nascent recovery and a profound structural realignment. The underlying movements reveal an industry in deep transition, simultaneously consolidating into larger, privately-owned "super-licensees" and fragmenting with the continued emergence of new boutique firms. This dynamic is unfolding against a backdrop of significant regulatory evolution.

The profession is actively grappling with the implementation of the landmark Delivering Better Financial Outcomes (DBFO) reforms while contending with the fast-approaching 1 January 2026 education deadline, a milestone that is increasingly influencing adviser career decisions and will shape the future composition of adviser numbers.

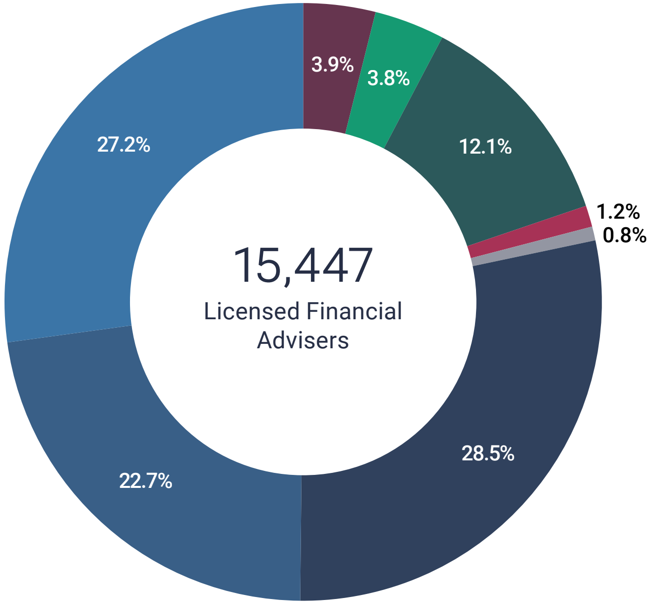
New adviser registrations

Source: Adviser Ratings



Industry overview (Q3 2025)

Source: Adviser Ratings



Diversified	3.9%	603
Industry super fund / Not-for-profit	3.8%	588
Stockbroker	12.1%	1,866
Bank	1.2%	178
Limited licensee	0.8%	116
Privately-owned (1 - 10)	28.5%	4,397
Privately-owned (11 - 100)	22.7%	3,503
Privately-owned (100+)	27.2%	4,196

ARdata estimates that 545 advisers are at high risk of leaving the profession with a further 583 at medium to high risk - these are advisers that per the Financial Adviser Register have incomplete information or still require further education. Whilst another 1,884 have incomplete information, we have assessed those under these licensees are going through the process of updating the Register. Given Treasury recently indicated no movement on the education pathways for a degree in any discipline to qualify before the 1 January 2026 deadline, succession planning, mergers or sale, or moving into the wholesale or the general advice space will be the natural step for these advisers.

Key themes defining the quarter include a qualitative shift in the adviser population, as regulatory pressures push some practitioners out while improved industry economics pull experienced talent back in. The licensee landscape is polarising between a drive for scale and a desire for autonomy, creating distinct pathways for advice practices. Furthermore, the DBFO reforms present a dual narrative of opportunity through reduced red tape and challenge through new compliance obligations, particularly as debate over the second tranche of legislation intensifies. This is all occurring within a cautious macroeconomic environment, where a steady cash rate, rising equities and asset prices and persistent inflation create operational challenges against a backdrop of an uptick in unemployment. Yet, confidence within the financial services, particularly advice sector, remains remarkably high.

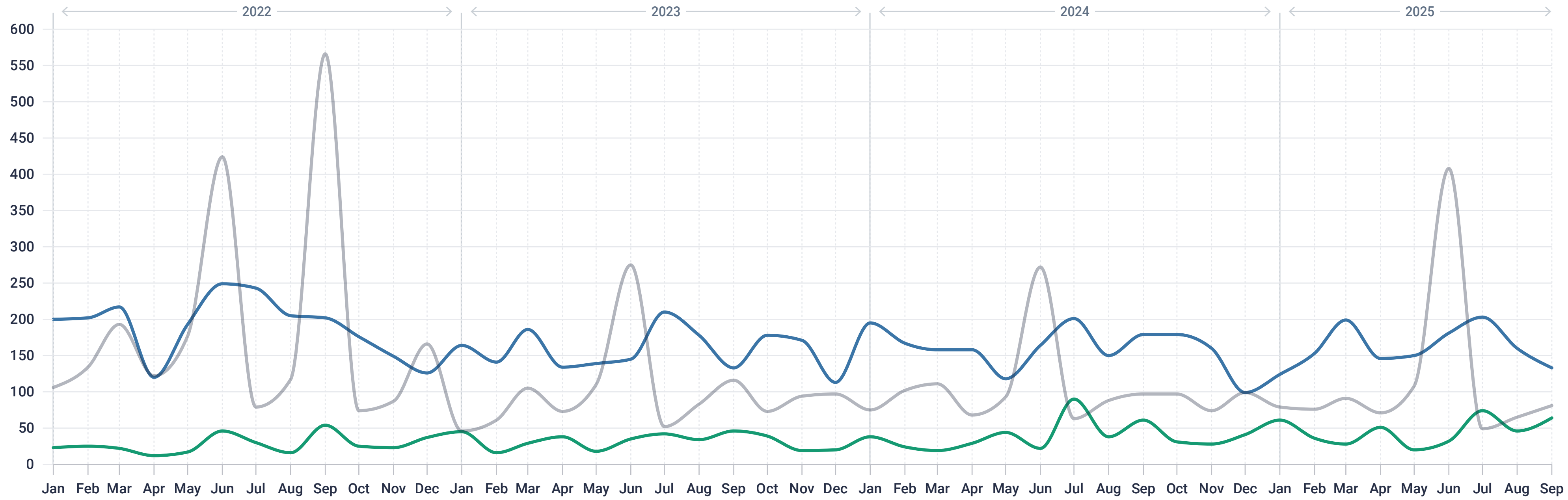
An estimated 545 advisers are at high risk of leaving the profession with a further 583 at medium to high risk

Adviser movements

As of 30 September 2025, retail financial advisers stood at 15,447. This figure represents a net increase of 196 advisers for the quarter. This is a significant turnaround from the net loss of 324 advisers in Q2 2025. The modest growth is the largest recorded in close to seven years. The 195 advisers who ceased were offset driven by 184 new entrants, and 237 advisers who had ceased practising in prior quarters returned. The quarter also saw 214 advisers switch licensees.

Adviser movements by type

Source: Adviser Ratings



Ceasing advisers

A total of 195 advisers ceased their registration during the quarter — the lowest figure since the introduction of education requirements. However, it is concerning that one-third of those departing were female advisers. Among those exiting, 44 were directors of practices, signalling early indicators of leadership and ownership changes across the advice landscape.

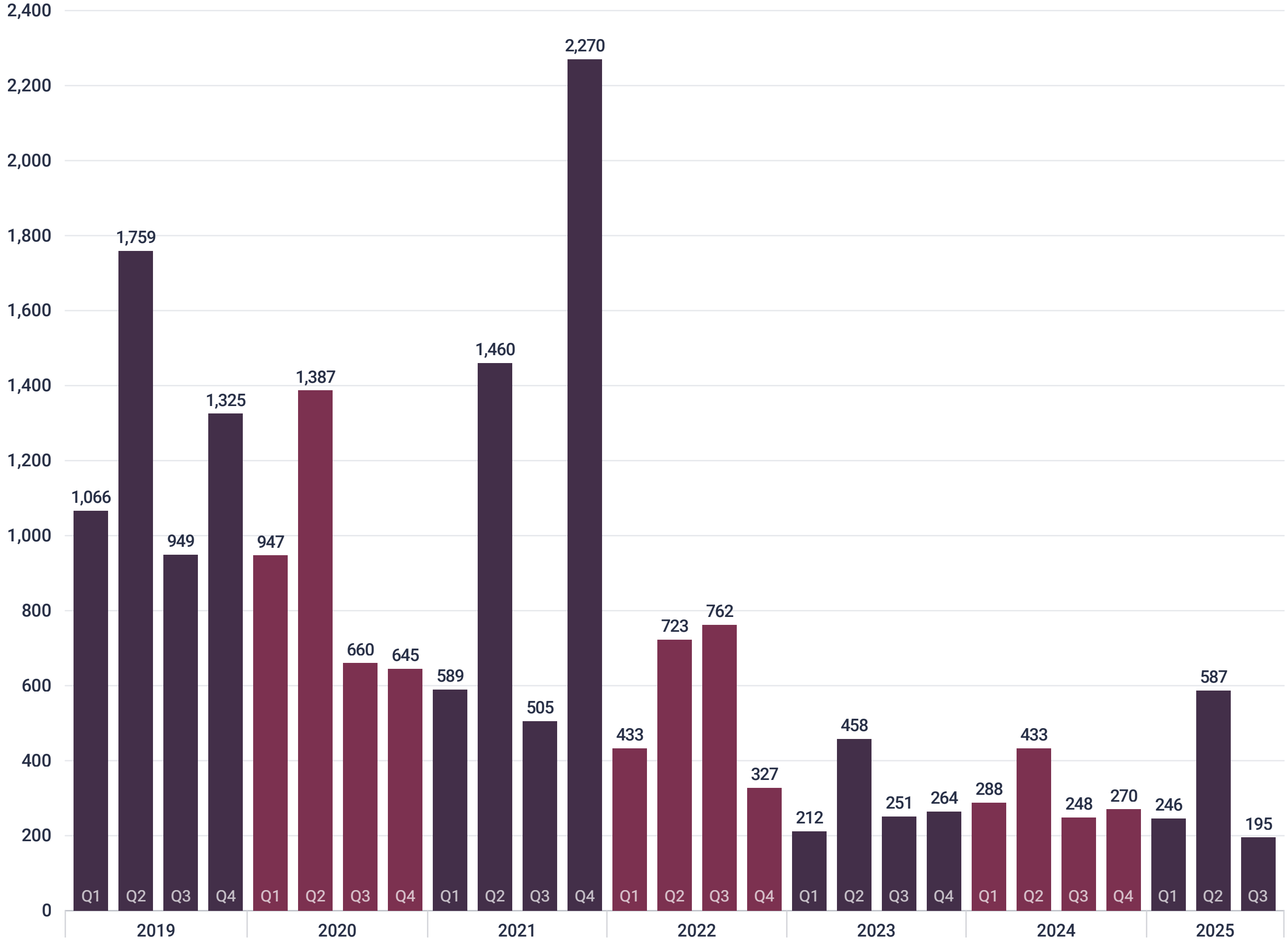
Notably, the practices from which advisers ceased registration showed a strong preference for HUB24 (used by 30% of these practices) and Zurich (the preferred insurer for 40%). These shifts may represent early signals for product manufacturers of potential changes in platform and insurance usage patterns as new directors and successors assume control.

Interprac also continues to experience adviser losses, primarily linked to the ongoing Shield / First Guardian fallout. Since the beginning of 2025, the licensee has recorded a net loss of 33 advisers.

> *Historically, adviser cessations peak in Q2, and as expected, total cessations have since returned to levels consistent with the prior three quarters.*

Ceased advisers

Source: Adviser Ratings



New Advisers

During the quarter, 184 new advisers joined the industry, including 51 female advisers — slightly offsetting the proportion who ceased. Of these, 131 required bridging courses, the majority of which were undertaken through Kaplan Professional.

This underscores the continuing influence of transitional education requirements in shaping adviser entry pathways. Pleasingly, Akumin led the charge with nine new entrants, followed by Count with seven and Consultum with six, indicating that some licensees are actively investing in new talent pipelines.

The introduction of DBFO2 and the passing of supporting legislation are expected to remove the financial and administrative barriers associated with these bridging programs. This reform aims to broaden the appeal of the profession by allowing entry from a more diverse pool of degree-qualified professionals, while enabling former advisers to re-enter the industry more efficiently.

While Deakin University continues to lead the way in producing financial planning graduates — with 19 advisers entering the industry through Deakin programs — other universities such as Griffith, Macquarie, Monash, RMIT, UniSA, and others continue to contribute meaningfully to the adviser pipeline.

The removal of bridging course requirements will likely have near-term commercial implications for Kaplan Professional, but at the same time, DBFO2 represents a significant opportunity to reshape the industry's talent base, accelerating pathways for both re-entry and first-time entrants with professional degrees.

New adviser graduates per institution (Q3 2025)

Source: Adviser Ratings

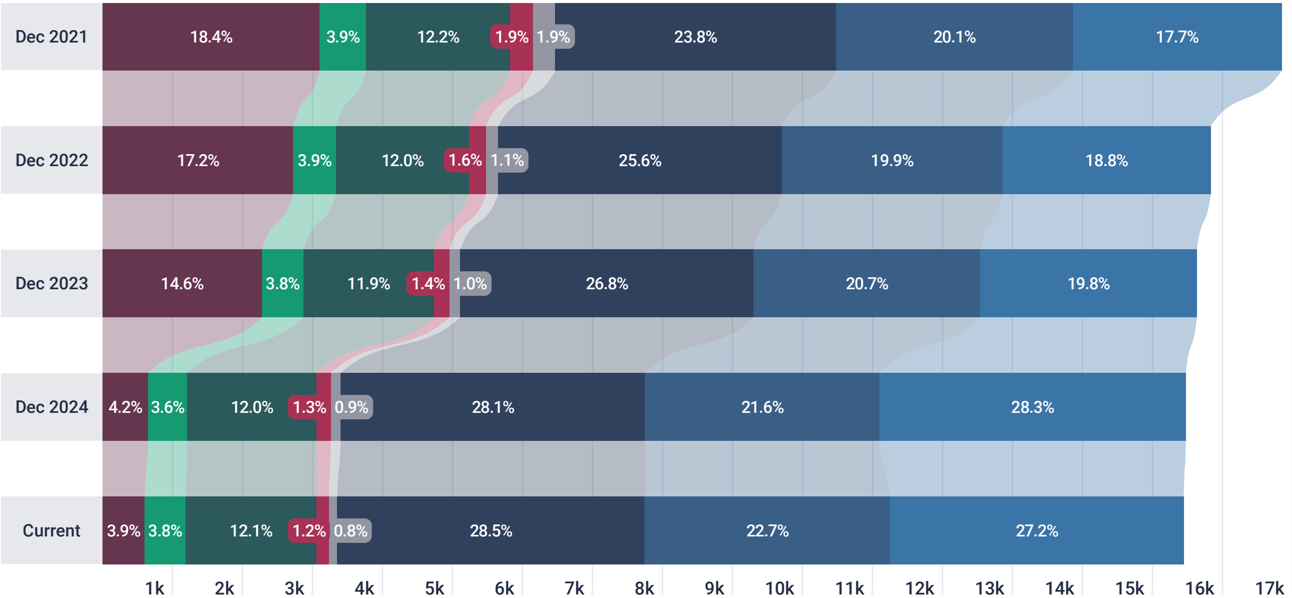
University	Advisers
Deakin University	19
Griffith University	8
Macquarie University	8
Monash University (MON)	8
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT)	8
University of South Australia (UniSA)	8
Queensland University of Technology (QUT)	7
University of Wollongong (UOW)	6
Curtin University	5

University	Advisers
University of New South Wales (UNSW)	4
University of Technology Sydney (UTS)	4
Central Queensland University (CQU)	3
The University of Sydney (USYD)	3
University of Adelaide (UOA)	3
University of Canberra (UC)	3
University of Melbourne (UOM)	3
University of Newcastle	3
Victoria University (VU)	3

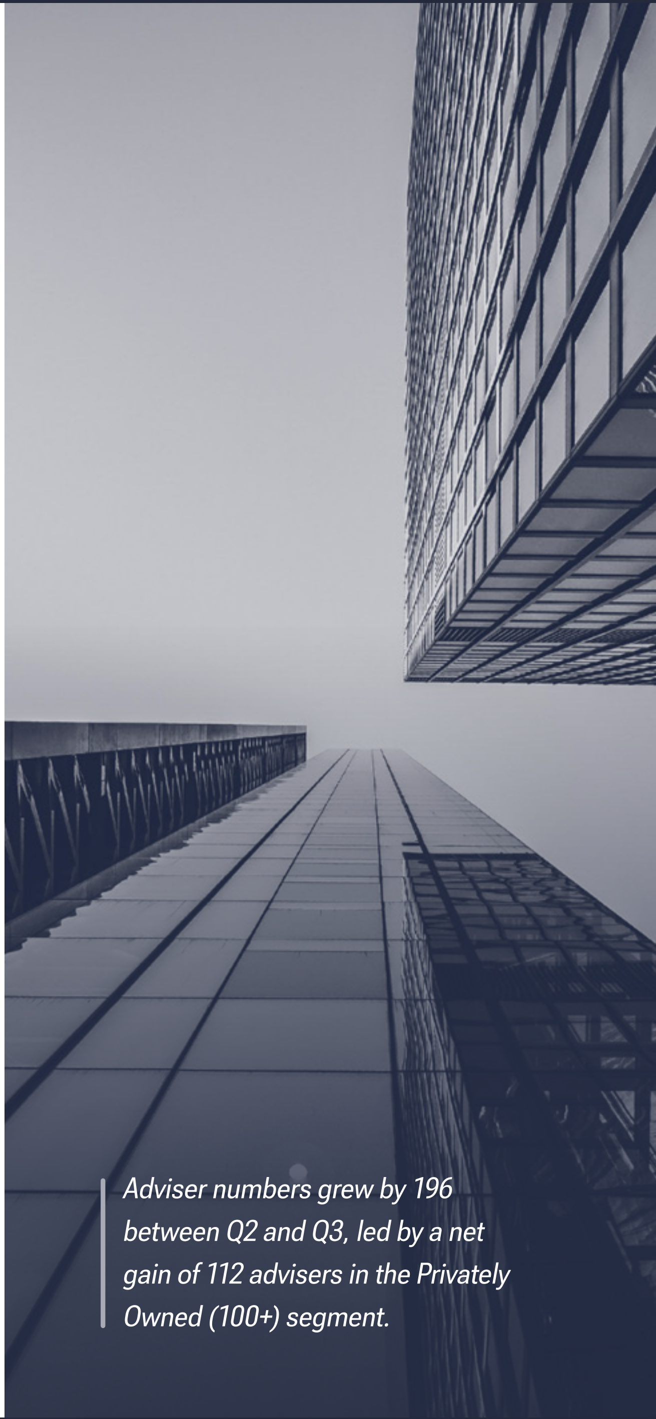
University	Advisers
Australian National University (ANU)	2
Bond University	2
Swinburne University of Technology	2
The University of Queensland (UQ)	2
University of New England (UNE)	2
University of Notre Dame	2
University of Southern Queensland (USQ)	2
University of Tasmania (UTAS)	2
University of the Sunshine Coast (USC)	2

Change in number of advisers by licensee segment

Source: Adviser Ratings



Segment	2021		2022		2023		2024		Current	
Diversified	3,102	18.4%	2,727	17.2%	2,280	14.6%	654	4.2%	603	3.9%
Industry super fund / NFP	665	3.9%	610	3.9%	592	3.8%	554	3.6%	588	3.8%
Stockbroker	2,054	12.2%	1,899	12.0%	1,863	11.9%	1,854	12.0%	1,866	12.1%
Bank	327	1.9%	247	1.6%	220	1.4%	201	1.3%	178	1.2%
Limited licensee	320	1.9%	172	1.1%	156	1.0%	140	0.9%	116	0.8%
Privately-owned (1 - 10)	4,014	23.8%	4,052	25.6%	4,193	26.8%	4,350	28.1%	4,397	28.5%
Privately-owned (11 - 100)	3,380	20.1%	3,152	19.9%	3,235	20.7%	3,350	21.6%	3,503	22.7%
Privately-owned (100+)	2,984	17.7%	2,974	18.8%	3,095	19.8%	4,374	28.3%	4,196	27.2%



Adviser numbers grew by 196 between Q2 and Q3, led by a net gain of 112 advisers in the Privately Owned (100+) segment.

Switching advisers

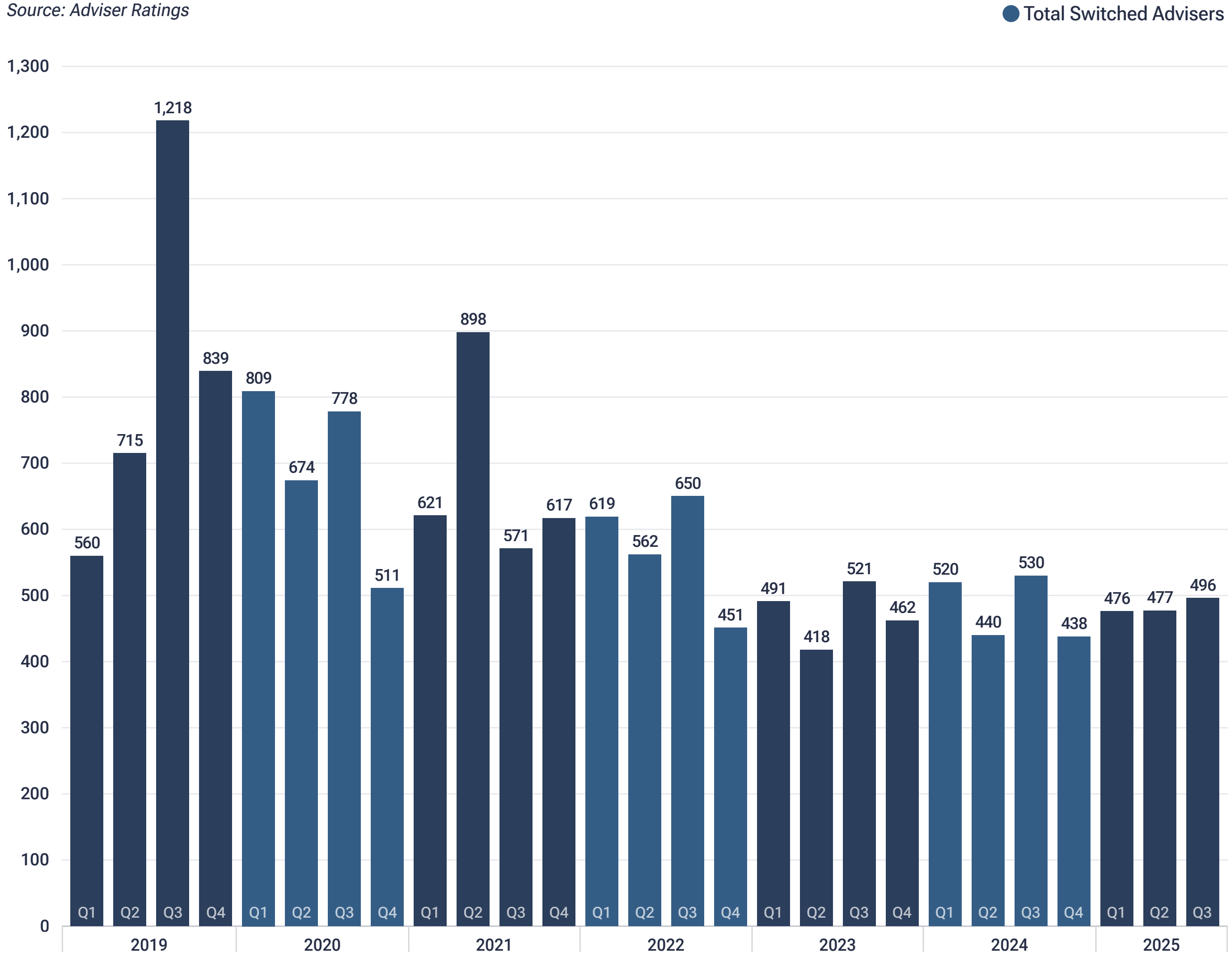
Continuing the broader trend of stabilisation in adviser movement, switching activity continues to trend downwards, reinforcing the view that home is becoming home for many advisers. This reduced mobility is enabling licensees to shift focus toward mergers and acquisitions (M&A) — a key highlight from this year's Landscape Report and a sign of increasing structural consolidation across the advice sector.

During the quarter, 496 advisers "switched" licensees (including returning advisers). Among the more active groups, Fortnum (24), Synchron (15), Guideway (12) and Lifespan (8) led the way. However, in Fortnum's case, only nine were genuine external switches, with 15 representing internal transfers from *Fortnum Private Wealth* to *Fortnum Advice*.

> *Total advisers switching licensees remained stable in Q3 with a modest increase of 19 advisers as compared with Q2.*

Switched adviser movements

Source: Adviser Ratings



The changing face of licensees and practices

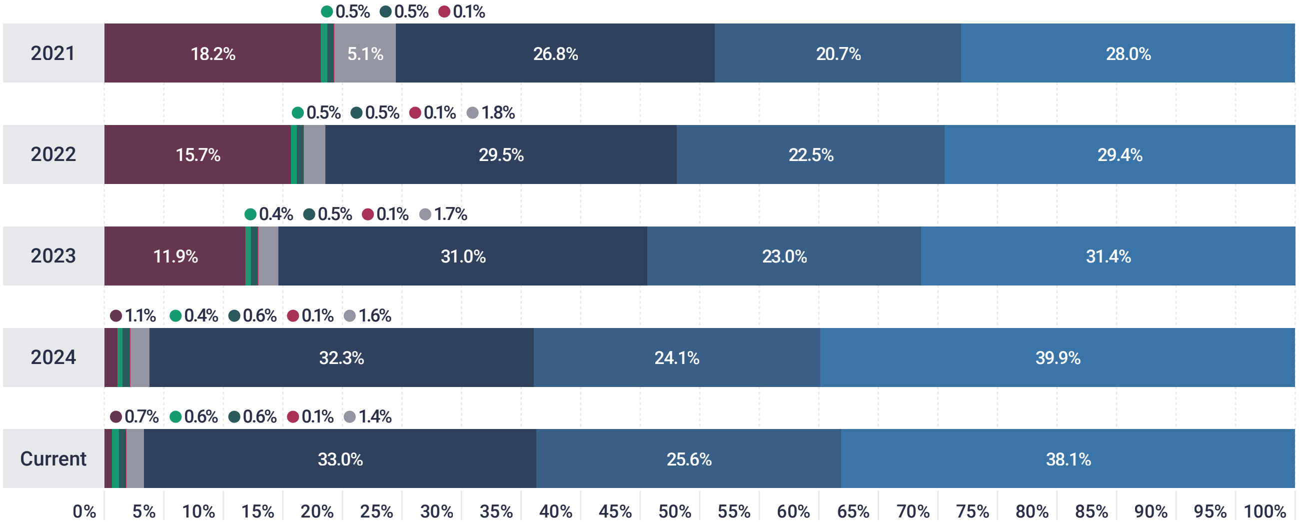
The privately owned segment continues its ad nauseam trend of steady growth, reinforcing its dominant position within the advice landscape. Collectively, privately owned licensees accounted for more than 78% of the total market, with net growth of 218 advisers across the quarter. The strongest gains were seen in the Privately Owned (100+) category, up 2.7% (112 advisers), while the 11–100 adviser cohort also recorded a solid 1.9% increase (64 advisers). This ongoing expansion underscores the continued attraction of mid-to-large independent groups — often characterised by agility, succession planning support, and adviser-centric service models.

In contrast, Diversified groups experienced a further contraction, falling 5.3% quarter-on-quarter as these institutions — notably Insignia and other listed entities — maintained a strategic focus on retaining only their most profitable and strategically aligned practices. This measured consolidation reflects the continued recalibration of larger, diversified licensees in response to margin pressures and compliance costs.

Smaller or institutionally aligned segments such as banks, limited licensees, and diversified models all remain flat to negative, while industry superfund / not-for-profit licensees were broadly stable, posting a modest 1.2% uplift.

Practice distribution by licensee segment (2021 – current)

Source: Adviser Ratings



Segment	2021		2022		2023		2024		Current	
Diversified	1,260	18.2%	995	15.7%	725	11.9%	67	1.1%	40	0.7%
Industry super fund / NFP	38	0.5%	33	0.5%	27	0.4%	27	0.4%	33	0.6%
Stockbroker	34	0.5%	32	0.5%	33	0.5%	35	0.6%	36	0.6%
Bank	8	0.1%	5	0.1%	5	0.1%	5	0.1%	3	0.1%
Limited licensee	355	5.1%	113	1.8%	103	1.7%	97	1.6%	85	1.4%
Privately-owned (1 - 10)	1,858	26.8%	1,874	29.5%	1,890	31.0%	1,961	32.3%	1,956	33.0%
Privately-owned (11 - 100)	1,434	20.7%	1,427	22.5%	1,405	23.0%	1,462	24.1%	1,520	25.6%
Privately-owned (100+)	1,942	28.0%	1,869	29.4%	1,917	31.4%	2,423	39.9%	2,261	38.1%

> *Overall, the data reinforces the ongoing structural shift toward private ownership, where scale, cultural alignment, and business autonomy continue to attract both advisers and acquirers.*

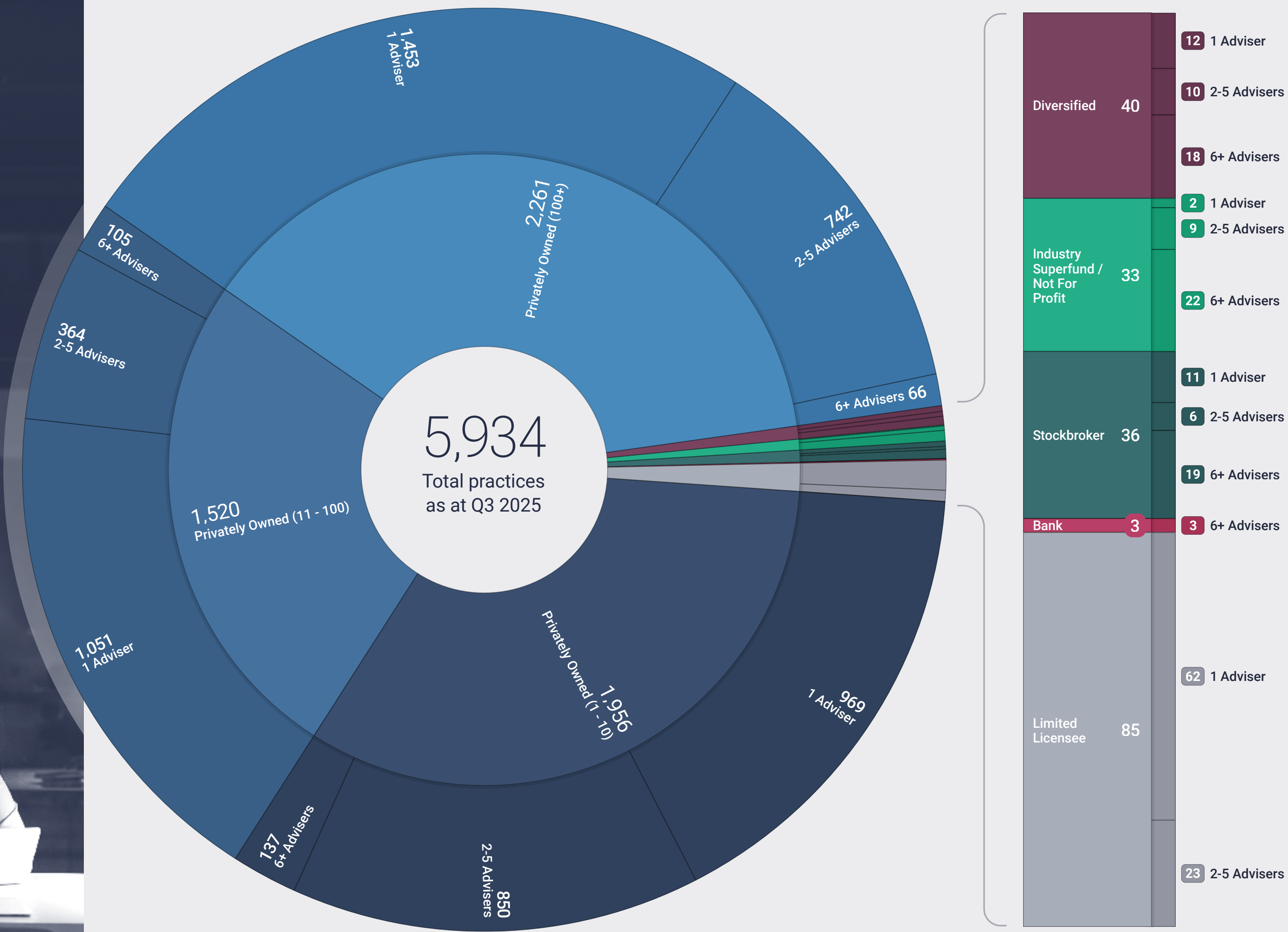
Practice Shifts

Despite the increase in adviser numbers — the first in seven years — the total number of practices declined slightly, falling from 5,944 to 5,934 quarter-on-quarter. This subtle contraction highlights an evolving structural shift in the industry: growth through consolidation rather than organic expansion.

We are beginning to see clear signs of an M&A uptick across "practice land", as firms pursue scale, succession solutions, and operational efficiencies. This activity is being echoed at a data level, with ARdata recording a record number of requests from M&A players seeking industry assessments and granular practice-level insights to support due diligence and valuation analysis.

Practice distribution (Q3 2025)

Source: Adviser Ratings



Sankey no longer a "Sinkey"?

While adviser numbers rose at its greatest rate in seven years, the number of practices dipped slightly from 5,944 to 5,934. The modest contraction signals that while adviser capacity is returning, it's increasingly being absorbed within larger, better-resourced firms — an early marker of industry consolidation through acquisition and succession, rather than fragmentation.

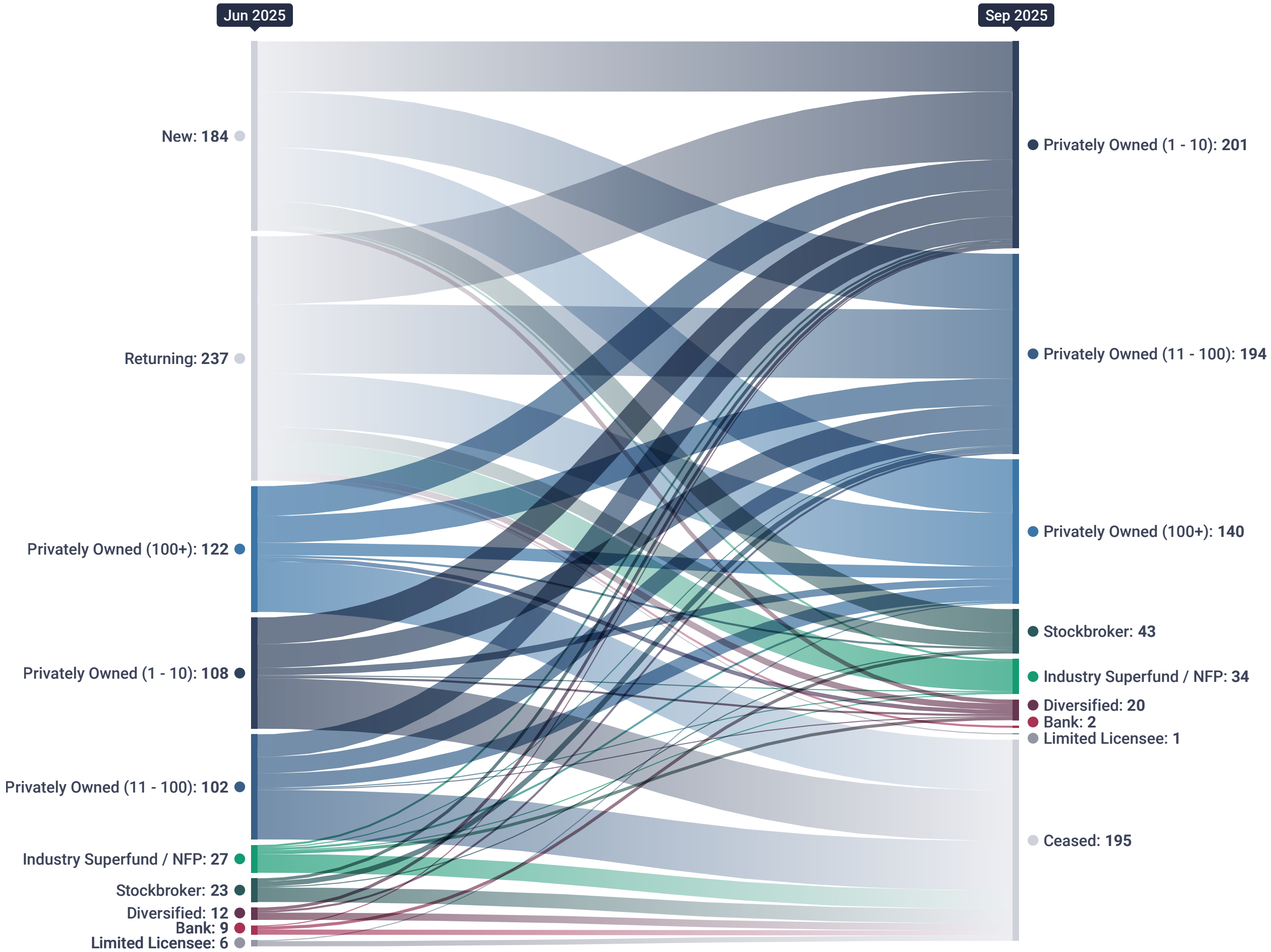
Importantly, this structural tightening aligns with what's now visible in the adviser movement Sankey diagram — which, for once, can't be called "sinkey." The flows show a healthier balance between departures and re-entries, evidence that adviser confidence and mobility are both improving.

At the same time, Privately Owned licensees continue to dominate, representing nearly 97% of practices and continuing their long-term growth trend. Diversified groups, particularly listed players such as Insignia, remain focused on retaining profitable, strategically aligned practices, refining rather than expanding their footprint.

Supporting this consolidation narrative, ARdata has recorded record demand from M&A participants seeking granular, practice-level intelligence. The result: a sector evolving toward fewer, stronger, and more commercially aligned practices, with adviser headcount finally stabilising and — as the Sankey shows — movement that's no longer one-way down.

Adviser movements (Q3 2025)

Source: Adviser Ratings.



Licensees Losing Advisers

Adviser movement remained relatively stable this quarter, with several mid-sized licensees experiencing notable outflows. Fortnum Private Wealth recorded the largest transition activity, with 22 advisers moving across five different licensees. This follows the strategic separation between Fortnum Wealth and Fortnum Advice, signalling the continued realignment of the group's licensing structure and the resulting adviser redistribution.

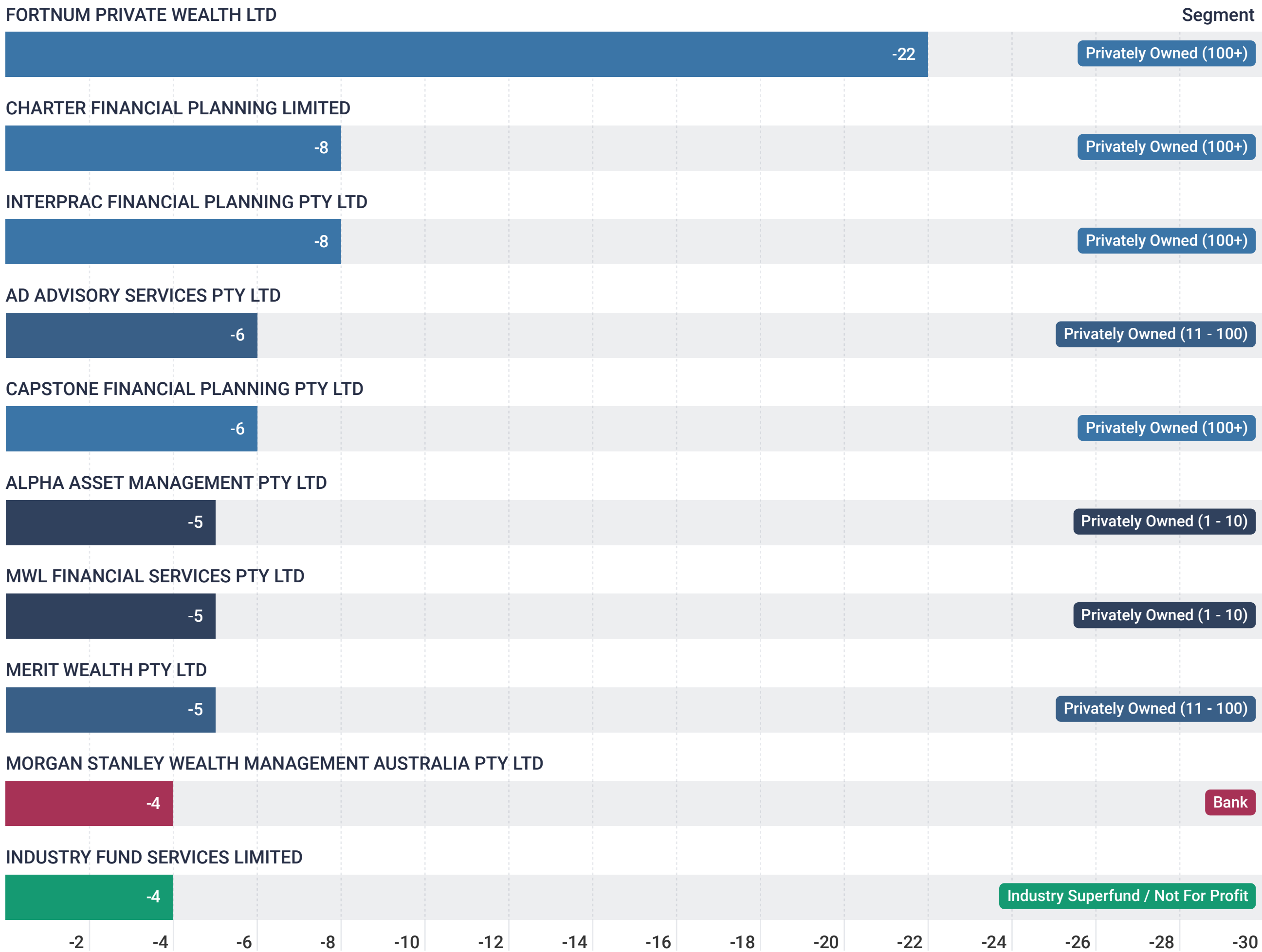
Interprac Financial Planning also saw movement with 8 adviser losses, consistent with the ongoing Shield / First Guardian fallout noted earlier. Charter Financial Planning, AD Advisory Group, and Capstone Financial Planning rounded out the top five, each recording adviser shifts to between four and five different licensees.

While some of these changes reflect normal seasonal movement, others underscore deeper structural repositioning within the advice ecosystem, as advisers seek stronger alignment with licensee philosophy, ownership, or support models.

Disclaimer: *The Musical Chairs report captures adviser movements between licensees only and does not include intra-licensee practice transfers or adviser reshuffles. These more granular, real-time transitions are tracked within Adviser Ratings' Nightingale platform, offering a deeper view of adviser and practice mobility dynamics.*

Licensees with most reductions in Q3 2025

Source: Adviser Ratings



Licensees Winning Advisers

The quarter saw measured but meaningful adviser inflows across several licensees, with Synchron and Guideway emerging as the standout destination as mentioned earlier.

Fortnum, Lifespan, Consultum and United Super also recorded steady gains, while Focus Partners Wealth and GPS Wealth continued to attract experienced talent through their relationship-driven and service-oriented models.

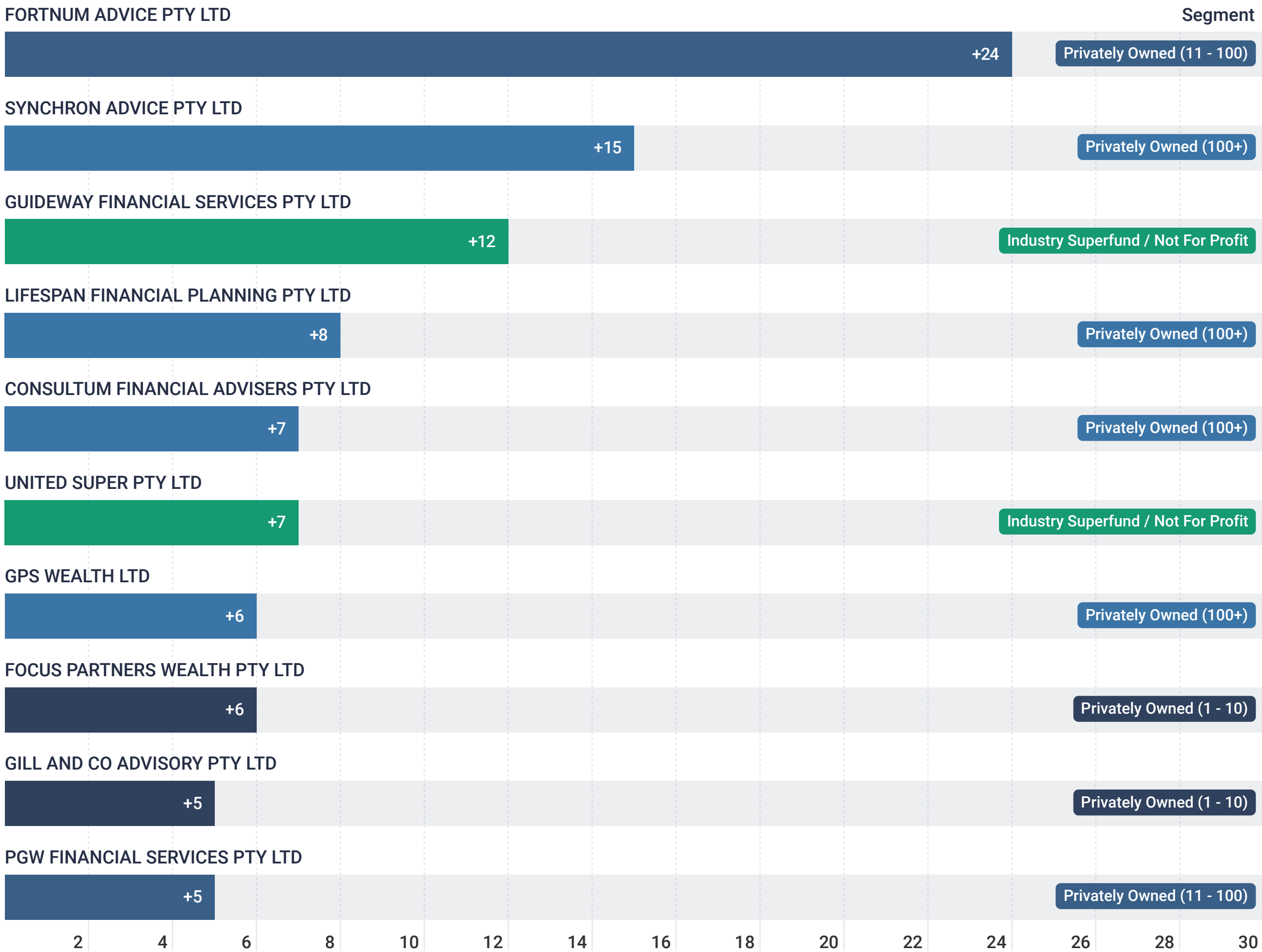
The diversity of inbound licensees underscores the fluidity of adviser movement, with shifts being driven less by regulatory exits and more by alignment with culture, succession planning, and operational support.

Overall, adviser inflows are becoming increasingly strategic rather than reactive, signalling growing confidence among advisers to reposition within a reshaping marketplace.

Disclaimer: The Musical Chairs report captures adviser movements between licensees only and does not include intra-licensee practice transfers or adviser reshuffles. These more granular, real-time transitions are tracked within Adviser Ratings' Nightingale platform, offering a deeper view of adviser and practice mobility dynamics.

Licensees with most adviser additions in Q3 2025

Source: Adviser Ratings



Licensee movements

The boutique licensee trend continued through Q3, with all newly established AFSLs again falling within the Privately Owned (1–10) category. These entrants typically housed between one and five advisers, reinforcing the growing appeal of smaller, agile operating models. Most of the new licences were formed by advisers transitioning from other Privately Owned licensees, highlighting the ongoing reshaping of the independently owned advice market rather than expansion from new entrants.

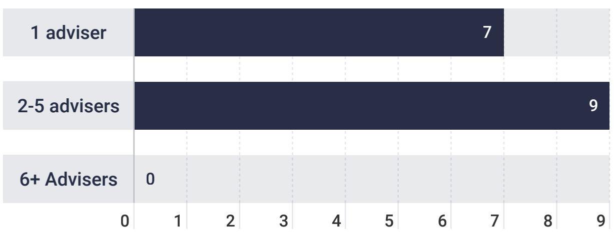
Meanwhile, 19 licensees ceased during the quarter, the vast majority of which had been in operation for over a decade. Notable closures included PricewaterhouseCoopers Securities, Bank of Queensland, and Equity Trustees Wealth Services, signalling further retreat from diversified and institutionally linked entities. Among the ceased group, 63% were small privately owned firms with fewer than 10 advisers, consistent with long-term structural consolidation.

New licence creation remains focused on autonomy rather than scale, while attrition reflects natural succession, merger, or integration outcomes. The rise of small, self-licensed entities continues to illustrate advisers' preference for control, cultural alignment, and tailored client service models, even as broader industry consolidation progresses.

Diversified licensees, while fewer in number, continue to focus on high-value segments of the market, maintaining strategic discipline in an evolving landscape.

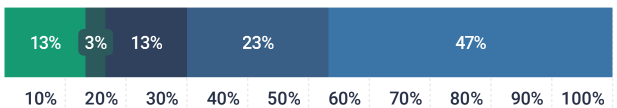
Size of new licensees

Source: Adviser Ratings



Where were advisers before going to a new licensee

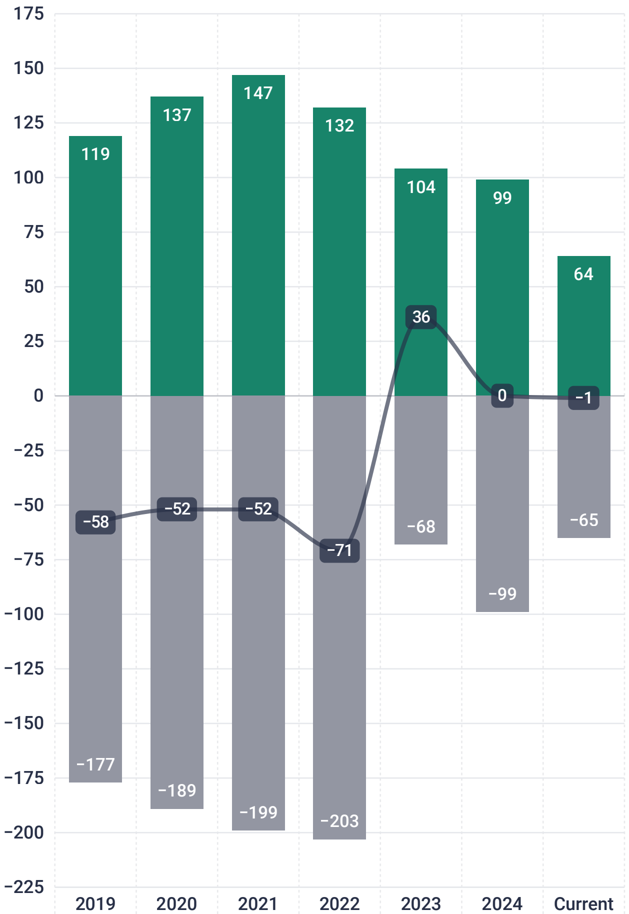
Source: Adviser Ratings



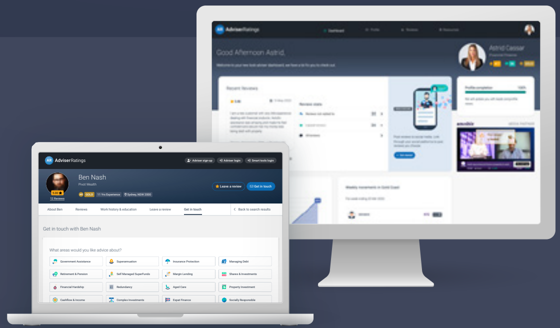
Industry Superfund / Not For Profit	4	13.3%
Stockbroker	1	3.3%
Privately Owned (1 - 10)	4	13.3%
Privately Owned (11 - 100)	7	23.3%
Privately Owned (100+)	14	46.7%

Licensees: newly registered vs discontinued

Source: Adviser Ratings



Our products



Consumer Marketplace

A public website that connects consumers with 17,000 financial advisers, through articles or research, and lead generation.

Nightingale Analytics

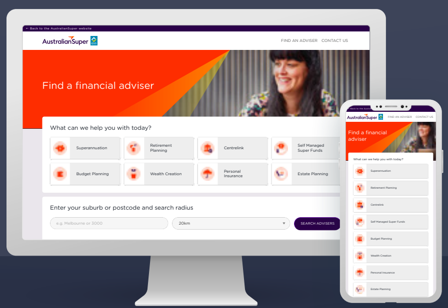
A customisable data service comprising contact and insight intelligence on the universe of advisers, practices and licensees for growth and compliance applications. Data is supplied via various means, including API and SFTP flat files.

Market Research

Essential fact-based research powered by our unique data insights. Featuring staple industry reports (free and paid), including the Financial Advice Landscape report and the quarterly Musical Chairs report.

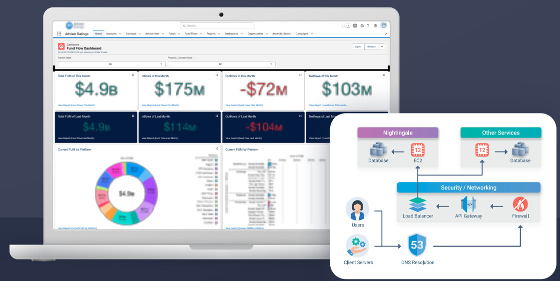
White-Label “Find An Adviser”

A customisable web service including design, hosting and data to help clients with customer retention and acquisition.



CRM integration

Certified CRM experts that use inhouse solution design packages that fully leverage the Nightingale Analytics and Fund Flow data. Data updates can be automated via our API. Tactical, specialist and flexible CRM support is available with long term agreements.



Adviser Quality Scores

A proprietary scoring systems to determine “quality of advice” benchmark and standard on financial advisers. The ‘credit score’ of the financial advice industry.

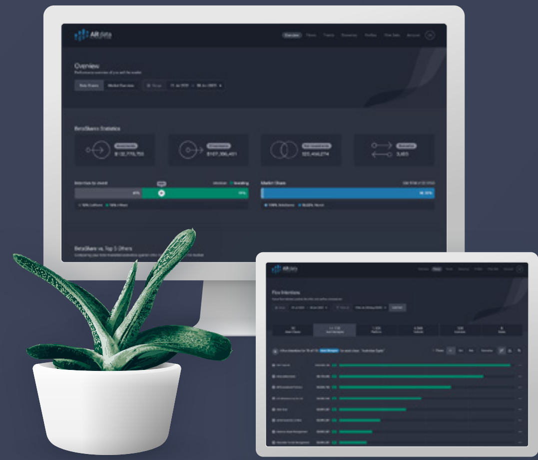
Our products

Life Insurance Barometer

An industry led and supported data sharing proposition that allows participating life insurers deep actionable insights into the retail advice market, advisers writing risk and where the opportunities reside. Under the remit of ARdata considerable investment is being undertaken in this Beddoes product to provide unique actionable data and link system growth to its consumer proposition to benefit the overall retail life industry.

Fund Flow Intention

Australia's first predictive model for investment fund flows. Harnessing the Product Rex modelling tool, it facilitates the creation of dynamic, adviser-driven scenarios to optimize client portfolios across asset classes and platforms. This robust tool correlates strongly with real investment outcomes, empowering sales, marketing, product, and research teams with actionable insights and real-time feedback on targeted campaigns.



ProductRex

ProductRex is now Australia's largest portfolio construction tool, utilised by 5,500+ advisers. It is embedded in multiple software CRMs and applications with open API access. For vendors, it is the only place in the market that has dynamic ad serving capability at the time a portfolio is being constructed.

Fund Flow Reporting

An outsourced solution for fund managers for preparation of monthly reporting on financial adviser applications and redemptions through fund products held on investment platforms and delivered through client's CRMs or external interfaces, such as PowerBI.

Quotable Quotes

" We don't want this to be our Kodak moment."

Vicki Doyle, Rest's CEO,at AFR Super and Wealth Summit when discussing the risk facing Australians who cannot afford financial advice and are turning to online help, like TikTok, whilst legislation for DBFO remains in limbo.

" ASIC is concerned that, based on current information, at least 3,459 relevant providers may be unable to provide advice after 31 December 2025."

- ASIC Media Release, urging financial advisers to urgently update their qualifications and status on the Financial Advisers Register ahead of the 1 January 2026 deadline.

" Ensuring Australia's financial system is fit for today, and for the future, requires forward-thinking investment and connection."

Joe Longo, ASIC Chair, from his speech to the National Press Club, discussing the importance of a resilient financial system.

" We saw an opportunity to use the data to create new ways for insurers to 'see' exposure, ways that could result in better outcomes for advisers and the insurers that could adapt and change. We've helped advice firms cut the quotes they get from insurers by as much as half in some instances. Part of that is a bit of disintermediation, dislodging entrenched brokers, but most of it is simply the more granular accuracy."

Richard Silberman, Numerisk's CEO, when discussing its data and technology to bring better pricing and coverage to more than 160 AFSLs since its launch 2 years ago, setting it up as the fastest growing GI broker in financial advice in the last 2 decades.

" This is an important outcome that stems the significant losses that threatened thousands of members' retirement savings after they used Macquarie's platform to invest their super in Shield... Superannuation trustees offering choice platforms are on notice. They are gatekeepers for retirement savings. ASIC expects them to take active steps to monitor the funds they make available to members through their platforms."

- Sarah Court, ASIC Deputy Chair. ASIC has been resolute in its pursuit of platform operators, stressing their gatekeeper role following an agreement with Macquarie regarding its failure to properly monitor the Shield fund on its platform.

" More than 2.5 million Australians will retire in the next decade – and many will be shocked to discover there are fewer than 15,300 professional financial advisers to assist them with some of the biggest decisions of their lives."

Richard Webb, CPA Australia's superannuation lead, on the need to reduce red tape to prevent further adviser exits.

Glossary of Terms

Adviser Movements

New adviser
A new entrant who is newly registered as a financial adviser on ASIC's financial adviser register (FAR) in the sample period.

Ceased adviser
A financial adviser whose AFSL Authorisation with a licensee has ceased during the sample period.

Switched adviser
An existing or previously licensed financial adviser who has switched-in to a new practice/licensee in the sample period.

Returning adviser
A financial adviser whose AFSL Authorisation was de-registered prior to the sample period and has switched-in to a new practice/licensee in the sample periods.

Licensee Types

Bank
Where a bank owns the advice licensee although advisers can be self-employed.

Stockbroker
Where stockbroking is the primary business line even if owned by a bank.

Industry Superfund / Not for Profit
Includes mutual building societies, credit unions and banks.

Diversified
Where other core business lines exist within the broader group.

Limited Licensee
As defined through their ASIC registration under specific "classes of securities".

Privately owned (100+ advisers)
Any firm not captured in the other categories with 100+ advisers.

Privately owned (11-100 advisers)
Any firm not captured in the other categories with 11-100 advisers.

Privately owned (1-10 advisers)
Any firm not captured in the other categories with 1-10 advisers.

***Note:** Licensee type, and accordingly adviser type, is defined by its ability to authorise products and its ownership structure (we note many accountants reside in a full licence).*

ARdata

ARdata provides insights to the financial services ecosystem. We operate as a stand-alone service to assist fund managers, super funds, platforms, insurers, and other industry service providers reach advisers they want to work with.

Consolidating ASIC information with our proprietary methods, our data is the most valuable, up-to-date, and accurate in the market.

Our Nightingale data service can be customised to any specific scope, including monthly reports on advisers switching, entering or exiting the industry.

Learn more about ARdata

2025 Australian Financial Advice Landscape Report

Key insights within this edition of the Musical Chairs Report have been taken from the 2025 Australian Financial Advice Landscape Report. This report gives a deep dive into the current state of the financial advice industry. This report is available as a free download via the link below.

Download the report

Contributors

Nicolas Peña Mc Gough
Head of Data & Analytics
nicolas@adviserratings.com.au

Angus Woods
Founder
angus@adviserratings.com.au

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