AUSTCHAM HONG KONG
A MEMBER OF AUSTCHAM GREATER CHINA

2026 Response to the First Five-Year Plan Consultation and Chief Executive's Policy Address Submission

Submitted to:

THE HONOURABLE JOHN LEE KA-CHIU, GBM, SBS, PDSM, PMSM
Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

The Honourable John Lee Ka-chiu, GBM, SBS, PDSM, PMSM
Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
Central Government Offices
2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar
Hong Kong

10 August 2026

Dear Chief Executive,

2026 RESPONSE TO THE FIRST FIVE-YEAR PLAN CONSULTATION AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S POLICY ADDRESS SUBMISSION

On behalf of The Australian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, I am pleased to present our recommendations for the 2026 Policy Address and Hong Kong's First Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development (2026 to 2030).

AustCham Hong Kong is the largest and most active offshore Australian Chamber of Commerce globally and represents a membership of 1,000 Australian and Australian-affiliated businesses operating across financial services, education, energy, resources, healthcare, infrastructure, technology, and professional services. Our members have chosen Hong Kong as their regional headquarters, their capital-raising platform, and their gateway to the wider Asia-Pacific region. The long-term commercial success of our membership is structurally inseparable from the long-term success of Hong Kong as an open, rules-based, and globally connected international city.

We welcome the First Five-Year Plan consultation document as a meaningful milestone in strategic governance. Our submission responds directly to the consultation's core strategic priorities, filtered through the specific commercial experience of Australian enterprises operating in this city.

The Chamber offers these recommendations in a spirit of genuine partnership. Australia and Hong Kong share a common-law legal tradition, aligned financial regulatory architecture, overlapping capital markets, a substantial bilateral education relationship, and a shared commitment to open trade. Properly leveraged, this alignment positions Hong Kong as an indispensable node in Australia's own international economic strategy and positions Australian enterprise as a high-quality, long-term partner in Hong Kong's growth.

We have organised our submission around nine priority themes, with recommendations grouped by implementation horizon so that immediate actions can be assigned to relevant bureaux while longer-term bilateral processes proceed in parallel.

Yours sincerely,

Jason Chang
Chair
The Australian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong

cc:
Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, GBS, IDSM, JP
Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, GBM, GBS, MH, JP
Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Miss Rosanna Law, JP
Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Miss Janice Tse Siu-wa, GBS, JP
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Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, JP

2026 RESPONSE TO THE FIRST FIVE-YEAR PLAN CONSULTATION AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S POLICY ADDRESS SUBMISSION

The Australian Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong

SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Our recommendations are grouped into two implementation horizons. **Immediate priorities** are actions the Government can commence within the 2026-27 policy cycle using existing administrative authority. **Medium-to-long-term structural goals** require legislative change, capital planning, major institutional design, or bilateral negotiation. Recommendations marked **(†)** depend in part on action by the Australian Government; AustCham commits to advocating for these in parallel through our networks in Canberra, Austrade, and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, so that Hong Kong is not asked to act unilaterally.

This submission makes 42 recommendations across nine priority themes, grouped by implementation horizon below.

HEADLINE PRIORITIES

While the recommendations below are grouped by implementation horizon rather than ranked, the Chamber attaches strategic weight to three headline priorities.

1. The development of a **Critical Minerals Finance Framework (2.1)** would establish Hong Kong as the primary listing and financing venue for international critical minerals projects. This is the single largest near-term commercial opportunity in the bilateral relationship, connecting Australia's resource endowment directly to Chinese Mainland demand. Its administrative components, including formal equivalency recognition for the JORC Code and clearer listing guidance for pre-revenue resource companies, can and should commence within the 2026-27 cycle, supported by immediate expansion of the HKMA green taxonomy (2.2).

2. Structured progress toward a **comprehensive Australia-Hong Kong double taxation agreement (1.1b)** would reduce tax friction and uncertainty in two-way investment flows, particularly for Hong Kong-based investors into Australia.

3. Strengthening **the Australia-Hong Kong capital markets corridor (1.1a, 1.2)** would help unlock a materially greater share of Australia's HK$22 trillion superannuation capital pool for Hong Kong-listed and Hong Kong-structured assets.

IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES

- **Institutional Investor Disclosure Alignment (1.1a) (†):** The SFC and HKEX should work with APRA and Australian industry bodies to close the disclosure alignment gap for Australian institutional investors, supported by a dedicated engagement programme targeting the chief investment officers of the largest Australian superannuation funds.
- **Investment Structuring Promotion (1.2):** InvestHK should develop and deploy a targeted Australia-focused investment promotion strategy, including dedicated relationship management for major Australian financial institutions, superannuation funds, and listed corporates.
- **Hong Kong as a Strategic IFC Platform (1.6):** The Government should consolidate this submission's capital markets, family office, green and transition finance, critical minerals, resources, infrastructure and innovation recommendations into a single market-facing IFC narrative. Hong Kong should position itself as Asia's leading platform for capital formation, risk management and wealth allocation into strategic sectors, with Australia identified as a priority partner market.
- **GoGlobal Joint Ventures (1.3):** The GoGlobal Task Force should formally engage AustCham to identify and catalogue Australian enterprises willing to serve as joint venture partners in priority sectors, supported by a publicly accessible registry of Hong Kong-structured international joint ventures.
- **Wealth Connect Expansion and Early-Stage Capital Formation (1.5):** Wealth Connect should be enhanced in line with the Financial Secretary's stated direction, including expansion of eligibility, quotas, and the range of investment products available to Chinese Mainland investors, with changes implemented on a gradual and well-regulated basis. This should be supported by streamlined onboarding and strengthened investor education as product coverage broadens. In parallel, targeted incentives should be introduced to attract regional and international venture capital funds to Hong Kong, alongside co-investment platforms between government-backed funds and private venture capital to share early-stage risk in priority sectors.
- **Family Office and Wealth Attraction Programme (1.7):** The Government should continue and deepen Hong Kong's family office and wealth attraction programme, linking it more directly to investable themes such as critical minerals, resources, infrastructure, energy transition, innovation, biotechnology and private markets. Targeted outreach should be undertaken to Australian family offices, founders, private capital networks and next-generation wealth holders.
- **Critical Minerals Finance Framework Initial Components (2.1) (†):** HKEX and the SFC should commence the administrative components of the Critical Minerals Finance Framework within the 2026-27 cycle, including formal equivalency recognition for the JORC Code, clearer listing guidance for pre-revenue resource companies, and ESG disclosure templates tailored to mining and transition projects, ahead of the full framework set out under the structural goals below.

- **Strategic Overseas Engagement Budget for Priority Sectors (2.4):** The Government should allocate a dedicated annual budget for senior official and cross-bureau overseas engagement missions to priority markets, with Australia identified as a key target and Kazakhstan as a useful case study in resource-sector engagement. Recent overseas visits by senior Hong Kong officials have demonstrated the value of direct government-to-government and government-to-business engagement. A structured visitation programme would open doors for Hong Kong institutions, investors and corporates, and help execute the critical minerals, resources, family office, infrastructure, innovation and IFC priorities set out in this submission.
- **Green Taxonomy Expansion (2.2):** The HKMA's next taxonomy update should incorporate critical minerals extraction and processing, and transition infrastructure, including sustainable aviation fuel and green hydrogen, in explicit alignment with international transition finance taxonomies.
- **Experience-Based Professional Recognition (3.1a):** A structured Experience-Based Recognition Pathway should be implemented for professionals with a minimum of 10 years' verified practice, focusing assessment on Hong Kong-specific knowledge rather than re-testing foundational competence.
- **Australia-Focused Talent Recruitment (3.2):** Hong Kong Talent Engage should develop a targeted Australia-focused recruitment and retention strategy, with AustCham as co-designer and co-delivery partner, including a dedicated presence at major Australian graduate recruitment events and a structured alumni network.
- **Talent Retention Coordination (3.4):** A Talent Retention Coordination Office should be established within Hong Kong Talent Engage, providing centralised school placement visibility, spousal employment facilitation, housing guidance, and structured industry mentorship for new arrivals.
- **Anchoring Job Creation Through Company Attraction (3.5):** InvestHK and the relevant bureaux should pair talent admission schemes with a proactive company attraction strategy targeting multinational headquarters and innovation-driven firms, supported by transparent reporting on employment absorption across talent schemes to inform future policy calibration.
- **TGA Recognition and Medical Device Pathways (4.1):** A genuinely expedited registration track should be established for products holding current TGA approval, with reference recognition extended explicitly to Class III medical devices and advanced therapy medicinal products.
- **Aged Care Expertise (4.3):** The Government should engage formally with Australian aged care operators, designers, and policy experts to inform the design of Hong Kong's proposed Senior Housing and Assisted Living regulatory framework.
- **Graduate AI Partnership Programme (5.2):** A Graduate AI Partnership Programme should be introduced, providing businesses with a tax credit offsetting approximately 30% of the salary cost of each local graduate in their first two years of employment, conditional on structured graduate intakes, documented mentorship, and certified AI training.

- **AHKFTA SME Activation (6.1) (†):** The Trade and Industry Department should develop a dedicated AHKFTA SME Activation Programme in partnership with AustCham and Austrade, including a digital self-assessment tool, a service provider directory, and a bilateral business matchmaking function.
- **SME Financing Reform (6.2):** A specific financing track under the BUD Fund and the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme should be created for businesses engaged in bilateral trade facilitation activities, with the multi-quote administrative requirement replaced by a pre-approved service provider panel.
- **Dispute Resolution Promotion (6.3):** The Policy Address should give clear and prominent expression to the Government's commitment to Hong Kong's common-law judiciary and arbitration institutions, with the Department of Justice and HKIAC undertaking joint roadshows in major Australian cities.
- **Sports and Content Tourism Campaigns (7.2):** The HKTB should build targeted Australian-market campaigns around flagship sporting events and pilot a Reciprocal Australia-Hong Kong Content Tourism Programme within the next fiscal cycle, supported by a dedicated HKTB Australia marketing envelope.
- **Event and Restaurant Licensing Reform (7.3):** FEHD, the Fire Services Department, and the Buildings Department should implement a coordinated reform package covering: a published Performance Pledge to issue Temporary Place of Public Entertainment Licences at least one full day before an event's official opening time; a real-time approvals dashboard; updated guidelines permitting a broader range of event cooking methodologies under defined safety conditions; dedicated practice notes for temporary event infrastructure; and clear, consolidated restaurant licensing guidance with published processing timelines and a single-point enquiry function.
- **"M" Mark Funding Reform (7.4):** The Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau should work with the Major Sports Events Committee to refine the "M" Mark scheme, creating a front-loaded funding pathway for new internationally established events, with elevated first-year support tapering over three years and priority given to events capable of multi-year commitments.
- **2027 Rugby World Cup Activation (7.5):** The Government should establish a Cross-Bureau Working Group, including the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau, Hong Kong China Rugby, HKTB, InvestHK, HKTDC, Cathay Pacific, and AustCham, to deliver a coordinated Hong Kong promotional presence across Perth, Townsville, Melbourne, and Sydney during the 2027 Men's Rugby World Cup. Given the tournament dates, this Working Group should be constituted within the 2026-27 cycle.
- **Premium Culinary Tourism Programming (7.6):** The Government should work with the Vocational Training Council to develop a premium short-course programme at the Chinese Culinary Institute, open to the public and delivered in multiple languages including English and Putonghua, converting an underutilised world-class facility into a new category of tourism product.
- **Rolling Tender Model for Northern Metropolis Land Disposal (8.3):** The Government should pilot a rolling tender model for a defined tranche of Northern Metropolis industrial, logistics, and I&T sites, listed on nm.gov.hk with a minimum assessment period but no fixed submission deadline, assessed on a rolling basis against pre-published criteria.

- **Northern Metropolis Roadmap and Land Availability Schedule (8.4):** The Government should publish an indicative Northern Metropolis Development Roadmap to at least 2040, updated on a regular cycle, and a quarterly updated Northern Metropolis Land Availability Schedule on nm.gov.hk covering all industrial, I&T, and commercial sites for the following five years, including tenure type, disposal method, and whether a direct land interest is permitted.
- **International and Academically Diverse University Town (8.6):** The Education Bureau and Development Bureau should launch a proactive international university attraction programme for full, degree-granting, research-active residential campuses on competitive land allocation terms, with early engagement of Australian universities and recruitment of specialist institutions in sports science, performing arts, and design. A championship-standard golf course should be planned as an integrated component of the precinct's sporting network.

MEDIUM-TO-LONG-TERM STRUCTURAL GOALS

- **Bilateral Financial Services Dialogue and Double Taxation Agreement (1.1b) (†):** The Government should engage the Australian Treasury, ASIC, and APRA through a structured bilateral financial services dialogue, with a comprehensive double taxation agreement as the headline agenda item for engagement with the Australian Treasury, and HKEX and ASX should examine the feasibility of a direct CCASS-ASX settlement link over the medium term.
- **HKEX Competitiveness (1.4):** A formalised ASX-HKEX dual listing fast-track framework should be developed, incorporating mutual reliance on primary exchange disclosure, alongside structured cross-recognition of regulated digital asset frameworks between the SFC, HKMA, and their Australian counterparts. Consistent with AustCham's submission to HKEX's Listing Framework Competitiveness Review, HKEX should also broaden access to the listing framework for mid-cap and growth-stage companies, enhance secondary listing pathways, and review the competitiveness and uptake of the current SPAC framework.
- **Critical Minerals Finance Framework Full Framework (2.1) (†):** Building on the immediate actions above, the Government, HKEX, and HKMA should complete the development of a Critical Minerals Finance Framework establishing Hong Kong as the primary listing and financing venue for international critical minerals projects, including green bond structures calibrated to critical minerals supply chain projects and a bilateral working arrangement with the Australian Department of Industry, Science and Resources.
- **Clean Energy Trade Framework (2.3) (†):** The Government should engage the Australian Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water to establish a bilateral clean energy trade and investment framework, positioning Hong Kong as the preferred financing and structuring hub for Australian clean energy projects serving Greater Bay Area demand.

- **Education Partnership Framework and Skills Corridor (3.1b) (†):** A formal Australia-Hong Kong Education Partnership Framework should be established, underpinned by updated qualification recognition agreements between HKCAAVQ and the Australian Qualifications Framework, and incorporating bilateral internship pathways for Australian university students and joint industry-sponsored postgraduate programmes in transition finance, infrastructure delivery, and AI governance.
- **International School Capacity (3.3):** The Government should prioritise land allocation for international schools with Australian curriculum affiliations in the Northern Metropolis and design any flexibility in the 70:30 student ratio to reward schools contributing to talent retention objectives. Priority consideration should be given to supporting an additional campus for the Australian International School of Hong Kong.
- **Precision Medicine and Digital Health Hub (4.2) (†):** The Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau should engage the Australian Government to co-fund a Hong Kong-Australia Precision Medicine and Digital Health Collaboration Hub, co-located with Hong Kong Science Park's InnoLife cluster.
- **Regulated Industry AI Commercialisation and Data Governance Pathway (5.1):** A Regulated Industry AI Commercialisation Pathway should be established, partnering financial regulators, the Department of Health, the Department of Justice, private-sector AI developers, and regulated industry operators to fast-track AI applications in defined high-value use cases. This should be supported by accelerated modernisation of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance to align with international best practice while preserving arrangements that facilitate cross-boundary data flows with the Chinese Mainland.
- **Senior Commercial Dialogue (6.4) (†):** A formal, recurring Australia-Hong Kong Senior Commercial Dialogue should be established, co-chaired at ministerial level and convening annually to review the bilateral commercial relationship across emerging sectors.
- **Northern Metropolis Sports Infrastructure, Sports Science and GBA Mega-Event Role (7.1):** World-class sporting and leisure infrastructure should be embedded in the Northern Metropolis, University Town and New Territories North New Town developments from the outset, complemented by sports science centres of excellence in selected disciplines. Building on the successful co-hosting of the 15th National Games by Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, the Government should work with other GBA authorities on the integrated planning of sporting, leisure, transport, event, media, broadcast, hospitality and spectator-movement infrastructure through the lens of future multi-venue, multi-sport mega-events, and assess a pipeline of major international events capable of being staged across the GBA. The Government should also commission a formal assessment of Hong Kong's optimal functional role within any future GBA mega-event framework, alongside a structured bilateral partnership between the Hong Kong Sports Institute and leading Australian institutes of sport.

- **Northern Metropolis Sector Development and Liveability Foundations (Part 8):** The Northern Metropolis should be anchored in clearly defined sector focus areas across technology, healthcare and life sciences, artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, and high-end professional services, supported by accelerated infrastructure sequencing and integrated housing, schooling, healthcare, community, and recreational infrastructure from the outset.
- **Cross-Boundary Regulatory Sandboxes in the Northern Metropolis (8.1):** Cross-boundary regulatory sandboxes should be established within the Northern Metropolis to facilitate collaboration in data, fintech, healthcare, and AI between Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland Greater Bay Area jurisdictions, building on the sandbox logic proposed in Section 5.1 and the health innovation agenda in Part 4.
- **Park Platform Governance and Dual-Track Land Tenure (8.2):** Each Northern Metropolis precinct should be assigned to a designated existing park operator with publicly defined mandates, funding requirements, and performance benchmarks, rather than creating additional statutory bodies unless a clear market failure or capability gap is demonstrated. This should be supported by a dual-track tenure model of sub-lease arrangements for smaller occupiers and direct Government renewable leases for qualifying enterprises above a defined minimum investment threshold.
- **Cross-Government Business Incentive and PPP Coordination Unit (8.5):** A Business Incentive and public-private partnership unit should be established with a cross-bureau mandate, covering commercial feasibility assessment, diversified funding models for projects where land provision is not a viable return, active pre-tender engagement with prospective partners, and an institutional PPP case library accessible to all bureaux.
- **Public Housing Estate Regeneration (9.1):** The Government should establish a framework that enables private capital to participate in the redevelopment of ageing public housing estates in exchange for ownership or long-term interests in the commercial, retail and car parking components of redevelopment schemes. To improve investment viability, restrictions in Deeds of Mutual Covenant (DMCs), Government Leases and Master Layout Plans should be reviewed to allow greater flexibility in the location, design, user, alienation and future reconfiguration of welfare facilities, while maintaining the overall provision of essential community services.

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INTRODUCTION

AustCham's submission is grounded in a single organising principle: the competitive advantage that Hong Kong offers international business is most durable when government policy and private-sector capability are designed to reinforce each other. Hong Kong's strength under the "one country, two systems" framework, its unmatched access to the Chinese Mainland market combined with deep global connectivity, is a proposition that Australian businesses understand and value in concrete commercial terms.

Our members are active contributors to that proposition, bringing capital, expertise, governance standards, and international relationships that strengthen Hong Kong's position in the sectors that matter most.

Our submission addresses the First Five-Year Plan's strategic priorities in turn, drawing directly on the operational experience of our members. Where a recommendation depends on Australian Government action, we have marked it accordingly and commit to advocating for it in parallel through Australian channels. Where AustCham has offered to act as convenor or delivery partner, we do so as a standing commitment across all recommendations in this submission.

PART 1: INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL CENTRE AND CAPITAL MARKETS CONNECTIVITY

The Plan’s ambition to position Hong Kong as the pre-eminent financial hub connecting Chinese capital with global markets is one we fully endorse. From an Australian perspective, this ambition is not abstract. Australian superannuation funds represent one of the largest pools of long-term institutional capital in the Asia-Pacific region, with combined assets under management now exceeding HK$22 trillion, or approximately A$4 trillion.

The allocation of even a marginal additional share in that capital toward Hong Kong-listed and Hong Kong-structured assets would represent a materially significant capital inflow for the city’s markets.

1.1 Strengthen the Australia-Hong Kong Capital Markets Corridor

The current barriers to deeper Australian superannuation fund participation in Hong Kong markets are predominantly structural rather than motivational. Australian fund managers cite three specific friction points.

First, the absence of a comprehensive double taxation agreement between Australia and Hong Kong leaves withholding tax treatment and treaty relief uncertain relative to competing jurisdictions. Second, cross-border settlement, custody, and foreign exchange arrangements for Australian institutional mandates investing through CCASS remain operationally complex and costly.

Third, Hong Kong market disclosure practices are not always aligned with the portfolio holdings disclosure and reporting obligations that Australian superannuation funds carry under APRA's regulatory framework.

We recommend the Government engage the Australian Treasury, the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, and the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority through a structured bilateral financial services dialogue to map and address these barriers systematically, with progress toward a comprehensive double taxation agreement as the headline agenda item for engagement with the Australian Treasury.

AustCham Hong Kong would be pleased to work with the Hong Kong Government to identify the key policy, revenue, and implementation issues relevant to any future comprehensive Australia-Hong Kong double taxation agreement, and to support a constructive pathway for engagement with the Australian Government.

Concurrently, HKEX should work with ASX to explore the operational and regulatory steps required to reduce settlement and custody friction for cross-border portfolio investment and dual-listed securities, including examination of the feasibility of a direct settlement link between CCASS and the ASX Settlement Facility over the medium term.

To address the disclosure alignment gap, **we recommend** the SFC and HKEX work with APRA and Australian industry bodies to develop reporting and transparency practices for Hong Kong-listed products that allow Australian institutional investors to meet their home-jurisdiction obligations without bespoke workarounds. This should be supported by a dedicated institutional engagement programme targeting the chief investment officers of the largest Australian superannuation funds.

1.2 Position Hong Kong as the Premier Centre for Australian Outbound and Inbound Investment Structuring

Australian enterprises have long used Hong Kong as the primary structuring jurisdiction for regional investments, particularly in Southeast Asia, Japan, and the Chinese Mainland. That role is now under competitive pressure from Singapore, which has aggressively cultivated Australian corporate relationships through targeted incentive frameworks and government-to-government commercial engagement.

Hong Kong should respond not by matching Singapore's incentive structure dollar-for-dollar, but by differentiating on the basis of its unique advantages: direct access to Chinese Mainland capital markets; superior common-law dispute resolution; and a financial regulatory framework that is simultaneously internationally credible and domestically agile.

We recommend the Government commission InvestHK to develop and deploy a targeted Australia-focused investment promotion strategy, including dedicated relationship management for the largest Australian financial institutions, superannuation funds, and listed corporates with regional operations.

The strategy should articulate, clearly and in commercial terms, why Hong Kong's regulatory and legal architecture makes it the superior jurisdiction for investment structures involving both Australian and Chinese Mainland counterparties. This is a commercial argument that resonates with Australian treasurers and CFOs; it needs to be made consistently and at the right seniority level.

1.3 Advance the GoGlobal Joint Venture Framework with Australian Partnership Capacity

AustCham strongly endorses the GoGlobal initiative and the establishment of the GoGlobal Task Force.

Australian enterprises are well placed to serve as joint venture partners for Chinese Mainland enterprises seeking credible international expansion, particularly in markets where Australian commercial and regulatory relationships already exist, such as Southeast Asia, the Pacific, the Middle East, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

We recommend the GoGlobal Task Force formally engage AustCham to identify and catalogue Australian enterprises willing to serve as joint venture partners in priority sectors, including infrastructure, resources, agribusiness, and professional services.
A Hong Kong-registered joint venture involving an Australian partner brings a combination of technical credibility, international market access, and governance standards that directly addresses the reputational concerns that Chinese Mainland enterprises face in international markets. The structure should be formalised through a publicly accessible registry of Hong Kong-structured international joint ventures, creating a transparent benchmark for the programme's reach and quality.

1.4 Enhance HKEX Competitiveness for Australian and International Issuers

AustCham has engaged directly with Australian listed corporates, investment banks, resource companies, and institutional investors regarding Hong Kong's listing environment. Feedback indicates that while Hong Kong remains globally respected, there are structural areas where competitiveness can be sharpened.

Streamline Dual Listing Pathways. Australian companies considering Hong Kong dual listings consistently cite extended vetting timelines, disclosure duplication between ASX and HKEX, and settlement and custody friction. **We recommend** a formalised ASX-HKEX dual listing fast-track framework, incorporating mutual reliance on primary exchange disclosure where standards are substantively equivalent and harmonisation of continuing obligation reporting calendars where feasible.

Hong Kong should position itself as the natural secondary listing venue for Australian companies seeking Chinese Mainland investor access. Specific reforms to the listing regime for resource companies, which are central to this opportunity, are set out in Section 2.1.

Digital Asset and Tokenised Finance Leadership. Australian financial institutions are increasingly active in tokenised asset pilots and regulated digital asset custody.

Hong Kong's forward-leaning virtual asset regulatory regime presents a genuine competitive opportunity.

We recommend structured engagement between the SFC, the HKMA, and their Australian counterparts to enable cross-recognition of regulated digital asset frameworks; pilot programmes for tokenised green bonds involving Australian infrastructure assets listed in Hong Kong; and the establishment of a digital settlement interoperability working group between HKEX and ASX. This positions Hong Kong not merely as a traditional capital markets hub, but as a next-generation financial infrastructure platform.

Broadening Access for Growth-Stage Companies and Secondary Listings. Consistent with AustCham's submission to HKEX's Listing Framework Competitiveness Review earlier this year, **we recommend** HKEX broaden access to the listing framework for mid-cap and growth-stage companies through calibrated enhancements to revenue requirements, track record expectations, and listing processes; facilitate listings in high-growth and capital-intensive sectors, including critical minerals, technology, artificial intelligence, healthcare, and venture-backed enterprises; enhance secondary listing pathways to strengthen Hong Kong's attractiveness as an additional capital markets venue for overseas-listed issuers; and review the competitiveness and uptake of the current SPAC framework to ensure it remains internationally aligned. Competitiveness and investor protection are mutually reinforcing objectives: these enhancements would expand issuer diversity and deepen market quality without compromising governance standards.

1.5 Expand Wealth Connect and Deepen the Early-Stage Investment Ecosystem

We welcome the Financial Secretary's confirmation that authorities on both sides are reviewing enhancements to the Cross-boundary Wealth Management Connect scheme, including expansion of eligibility, quotas, and the range of investment products available to Chinese Mainland investors.

We recommend that this expansion proceed on a gradual and well-regulated basis, with streamlined investor onboarding, strengthened investor education as product coverage broadens, and pilot programmes that test incremental product diversification under robust supervision. Executed in this manner, Wealth Connect expansion will reinforce Hong Kong's position as the primary wealth management gateway between Chinese Mainland and international markets, while generating fee income, custody flows, and advisory mandates across the professional services ecosystem.

Capital markets competitiveness, however, depends not only on mature listings but on the depth of the early-stage funding pipeline that produces them. Hong Kong's venture capital and early-stage investment ecosystem remains thinner than the scale of its ambitions in innovation and technology would suggest.

We recommend targeted incentives to attract regional and international venture capital funds to establish or expand a presence in Hong Kong, tax and regulatory clarity for fund structures domiciled or managed in Hong Kong, co-investment platforms between government-backed funds and private venture capital to share early-stage risk in defined priority sectors, and alignment of these incentives with sectors identified elsewhere in this submission, including deep technology, life sciences, green technology, and advanced manufacturing.

A stronger early-stage funding pipeline will, over time, improve the quality and diversity of companies reaching Hong Kong's listing markets, reinforce the reforms proposed in Section 1.4, and anchor the innovation economy envisioned for the Northern Metropolis in Part 8.

1.6 Present Hong Kong's IFC Strategy as a Single Strategic Capital Formation Platform

Hong Kong's international financial centre proposition should be presented as a single integrated strategy rather than as a set of separate initiatives. Across this submission, the recommendations on capital markets connectivity, Australian superannuation capital, family offices, green and transition finance, critical minerals, resources, infrastructure, biotechnology, artificial intelligence and early-stage investment all point to the same opportunity: Hong Kong can be Asia's leading capital formation and wealth allocation platform for strategic sectors.

The task is not to dilute existing policy initiatives, but to connect them into a clearer market-facing narrative that international investors, corporates, family offices and governments can understand and act upon. Hong Kong's IFC strategy should connect capital, companies and strategic sectors, with critical minerals, resources, infrastructure, innovation and family offices treated as mutually reinforcing pillars of a single international capital formation agenda.

We recommend the Government, working with HKEX, the HKMA, the SFC, InvestHK and the Financial Services Development Council, develop a consolidated IFC narrative for priority overseas markets. For Australia, this narrative should focus on Hong Kong's role as the preferred Asian platform for Australian institutional capital, resource and critical minerals financing, family office and private wealth allocation, green and transition finance, dispute resolution, fund structuring and Chinese Mainland market access.

1.7 Continue and Deepen the Family Office and Wealth Attraction Programme

Hong Kong has made meaningful progress in positioning itself as a regional centre for family offices and private wealth management. This programme should continue, but its next phase should be more sector-focused, more international, and more directly linked to Hong Kong's broader IFC strategy.

Family offices and private wealth investors are increasingly seeking access to tangible strategic themes rather than generic wealth management propositions.

These themes include critical minerals, resources, energy transition, infrastructure, biomedical innovation, artificial intelligence, private markets and venture-backed growth companies. Hong Kong is well placed to curate these themes into investable opportunities, supported by its capital markets, asset management ecosystem, common-law framework, tax environment and access to Chinese Mainland demand.

We recommend the Government continue and deepen the family office and wealth attraction programme by developing sector-specific investment propositions, curated deal-flow channels, co-investment opportunities, thematic investor briefings and targeted overseas engagement. Australia should be treated as a priority market, with outreach directed to family offices, founders, private capital networks and next-generation wealth holders seeking Asia exposure through a credible, internationally connected platform.

PART 2: CLEAN ENERGY, CRITICAL MINERALS AND TRANSITION FINANCE

Australia is one of the world's largest producers of the critical minerals that underpin the global energy transition: lithium, cobalt, nickel, rare earth elements, and copper. The alignment between Australia's resource endowment and Hong Kong's ambition to become a leading transition finance hub is direct and commercially significant. Few bilateral relationships available to Hong Kong offer the same combination of resource depth, institutional credibility, and English-language legal frameworks.

2.1 Establish Hong Kong as the Primary Capital Markets Platform for Critical Minerals Finance

Global demand for critical minerals financing is growing rapidly as governments and corporates seek to secure supply chains for battery technology, renewable energy infrastructure, and defence applications. Australian mining companies, many of which already have Hong Kong-listed entities or are dually listed on ASX and HKEX, are seeking deep and liquid capital markets to finance the next generation of critical minerals projects. These companies are typically capital-intensive and often pre-revenue during early development phases, and the current listing regime does not adequately accommodate them.

We recommend the Government, working with HKEX and the HKMA, develop a Critical Minerals Finance Framework that establishes Hong Kong as the primary listing and financing venue for international critical minerals projects.

The framework should include clearer listing guidance for pre-revenue resource companies; expanded acceptance of internationally recognised resource reporting standards, including formal equivalency recognition for the JORC Code; ESG disclosure templates tailored to mining and transition projects rather than generic sustainability formats; green bond structures specifically calibrated to critical minerals supply chain projects; and a bilateral working arrangement with the Australian Government's Department of Industry, Science and Resources to facilitate the Hong Kong listing of Australian critical minerals enterprises.

Taken together, these measures would significantly increase Hong Kong's attractiveness as a capital markets platform for lithium, rare earths, nickel, and battery supply chain issuers, and would connect that capital directly to the Chinese Mainland's manufacturing base, the world's largest source of demand for these materials. The administrative components of this framework, including JORC Code equivalency recognition, listing guidance for pre-revenue resource companies, and tailored ESG disclosure templates, require no legislative change and should commence within the 2026-27 policy cycle; the Chamber accordingly identifies this as a headline priority of this submission.

2.2 Expand the HKMA Green Taxonomy to Include Critical Minerals and Transition Infrastructure

The HKMA's Green and Sustainable Finance Taxonomy is a significant institutional asset, but its current scope does not adequately capture the full range of activities essential to the energy transition.

Critical minerals extraction and processing, when conducted to internationally recognised environmental standards such as the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance certification, should be classified as transition-eligible activities within the taxonomy. Similarly, infrastructure enabling the conversion of hard-to-abate industrial processes, including sustainable aviation fuel blending facilities and green hydrogen production, should receive explicit taxonomy recognition.

We recommend the HKMA's next taxonomy update incorporate these categories in explicit alignment with the EU Taxonomy's treatment of transition activities and with reference to the ASEAN Taxonomy for Sustainable Finance. Australian resource companies and green infrastructure operators that meet these standards would immediately become eligible for Hong Kong-originated green finance, deepening the bilateral capital flow and reinforcing Hong Kong's credibility as a genuinely comprehensive transition finance centre.

2.3 Develop a Hong Kong-Australia Clean Energy Trade and Investment Framework

Australia is investing heavily in clean energy export capability, including green hydrogen, ammonia, and processed transition materials, with Asia-Pacific markets as the primary customers.

Hong Kong's decarbonisation pathway under the Climate Action Plan 2050 will run primarily through zero-carbon electricity, but the city retains structural demand for imported clean energy solutions in specific hard-to-abate segments, including sustainable aviation fuel for one of the world's busiest international airports, marine bunkering as shipping decarbonises, and clean energy inputs serving the wider Greater Bay Area industrial economy.

We recommend the Government engage with the Australian Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water to establish a bilateral clean energy trade and investment framework covering these segments.

The framework should include joint feasibility studies on clean fuel import and blending infrastructure, coordinated regulatory recognition of clean fuel certification standards, and the positioning of Hong Kong as the preferred financing and structuring hub for Australian clean energy projects serving GBA demand. This framing plays to Hong Kong's genuine strength, financing and intermediating the regional energy transition, while laying the groundwork for direct energy trade as demand matures.

2.4 Fund Strategic Overseas Engagement Missions to Priority Resource and Investment Markets

Hong Kong's ability to execute the critical minerals, clean energy, transition finance and investment priorities set out in this submission depends on sustained senior engagement with the overseas markets where project pipelines, operating expertise and institutional capital are located. Recent overseas visits by senior Hong Kong officials have demonstrated the value of direct government-to-government and government-to-business engagement in opening doors for Hong Kong institutions, investors and corporates.

We recommend the Government allocate a dedicated annual budget for senior official and cross-bureau overseas engagement missions to priority markets. Australia should be identified as a key target market given its resource endowment, institutional investor base, clean energy project pipeline, university sector and professional services capability. Kazakhstan also provides a useful case study for resource-sector engagement, particularly in relation to critical minerals, logistics corridors and emerging-market resource diplomacy.

The programme should not be treated as general promotion. It should be designed around specific commercial objectives, including critical minerals project origination, family office and private wealth attraction, institutional capital engagement, clean energy investment, university and research partnerships, and infrastructure collaboration. Each mission should include clear pre-mission targets, private-sector delegation opportunities, follow-up responsibilities and reporting against commercial outcomes. AustCham is willing to assist the Government in designing Australia-focused missions and connecting visiting officials with relevant business, investment, university and industry networks.

PART 3: EDUCATION, TALENT AND THE BILATERAL SKILLS PIPELINE

The education relationship between Australia and Hong Kong is one of the deepest and most economically valuable bilateral ties either jurisdiction maintains. Tens of thousands of Hong Kong students have been educated in Australian universities over decades. Australian universities operate campuses and partnership programmes in Hong Kong.

Australian vocational and professional training institutions have strong local market recognition. This relationship represents a strategic asset that neither government has fully capitalised on in policy terms.

3.1 Formalise the Education Partnership Framework, Skills Corridor and Professional Accreditation Reform

We recommend the Government engage with the Australian Department of Education to establish a formal Australia-Hong Kong Education Partnership Framework, modelled in part on successful international education memoranda of understanding (MOUs), covering mutual recognition of qualifications, joint degree programmes, student exchange facilitation, research collaboration, bilateral internship pathways, and joint industry-sponsored postgraduate programmes in transition finance, infrastructure delivery, and AI governance.

This framework should be underpinned by updated agreements between the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications and the Australian Qualifications Framework to streamline the recognition of Australian credentials for professional licensing purposes in Hong Kong. It would position Hong Kong as the primary Asia-based career accelerator for Australian-trained professionals while strengthening the long-term bilateral talent pipeline.

Professional accreditation reform is the single most consistent operational barrier identified in AustCham's consultation with employers across financial services, engineering, law, healthcare, architecture, and education.

Hong Kong competes globally for mid-career and senior talent, yet highly experienced professionals arriving under the Top Talent Pass Scheme or the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme are frequently required to sit entry-level examinations designed for new graduates. This misalignment delays workforce participation in skills-shortage sectors, signals to international professionals that their experience is undervalued, and redirects mobile talent toward Singapore, Dubai, and London where recognition frameworks are more proportionate.

We recommend the Government work with the statutory professional bodies to implement a structured Experience-Based Recognition Pathway for professionals with a minimum of 10 years' verified practice, clean regulatory records in recognised jurisdictions, and demonstrated senior responsibility in their field.

Assessment should focus narrowly on Hong Kong-specific regulatory, tax and procedural knowledge rather than foundational professional competence already evidenced through career history.

This reform would have immediate economic impact in accounting, legal services, engineering, construction, actuarial services, healthcare, and education, all sectors identified as strategically important under the Five-Year Plan.

3.2 Position Hong Kong as the Primary Study and Work Destination for the Next Generation of Australian Asia-Pacific Professionals

Hong Kong's most durable long-term asset in the global talent competition is its unique position as a place where professionals can build careers that bridge Australian institutional frameworks and Chinese Mainland market access. Few, if any, other cities offer that combination. It is a genuinely differentiated value proposition that is currently under-communicated and under-leveraged in Australian graduate and young professional recruitment markets.

We recommend Hong Kong Talent Engage develop a targeted Australia-focused recruitment and retention strategy that specifically articulates this value proposition to Australian graduates and young professionals in financial services, technology, law, and the built environment. AustCham is willing to co-design and co-deliver this strategy, drawing on our established networks with Australian universities and professional associations. The strategy should include a dedicated Hong Kong presence at major Australian graduate recruitment events, a structured alumni network connecting Hong Kong-based Australian professionals with incoming talent, and a digital content programme that showcases authentic Australian-in-Hong Kong professional narratives across channels relevant to Australian young professionals.

3.3 Accelerate the Development of Australian-Affiliated International School Capacity

Hong Kong's international school sector includes several institutions with strong Australian curriculum affiliations, and demand from both Australian expatriate families and locally resident families seeking an internationally recognised English-medium education continues to exceed supply. The Northern Metropolis development presents a concrete opportunity to address this supply constraint.

The most acute pressure point is the Australian International School of Hong Kong (AISHK), the only school in Hong Kong operating on the Southern Hemisphere school year and offering an Australian curriculum. AISHK has recently reached record enrolment and is close to capacity, with approximately 70% of enrolled students holding Australian or New Zealand passports.

For families relocating from Australia, New Zealand, and other Southern Hemisphere markets, continuity of curriculum, school calendar, and university pathway is a practical consideration rather than a preference.

We recommend that the Education Bureau give priority consideration to supporting the development of an additional AISHK campus, which would materially strengthen Hong Kong's family relocation proposition for mid-career talent from Southern Hemisphere countries.

We recommend the Government prioritise land allocation for international schools with established Australian curriculum affiliations in the Northern Metropolis development plan, and that the Development Bureau engage directly with operators of Australian-curriculum schools to understand their site, infrastructure, and regulatory requirements.

Concurrently, we endorse the proposal to review the 70:30 international student ratio, and **we recommend** that any flexibility mechanism be designed to reward schools that contribute demonstrably to Hong Kong's international talent retention objectives, including through structured local-international school partnership programmes.

3.4 Establish a Structured Talent Retention and Settlement Framework

Attraction schemes have been effective in generating inflow numbers. Retention, however, depends on lived experience. AustCham's Talent Committee identifies four operational gaps that influence retention decisions within the first 24 months: school placement uncertainty; spousal employment friction; housing cost volatility; and limited structured integration pathways.

We recommend the establishment of a Talent Retention Coordination Office within Hong Kong Talent Engage to provide a centralised international school seat visibility platform, employer-supported spousal employment facilitation, transparent guidance on rental market norms and tenancy protections, and structured industry mentorship networks pairing new arrivals with established professionals. Retention policy must evolve beyond visa issuance toward ecosystem design.

3.5 Anchor Job Creation Through Company Attraction

Hong Kong's talent admission schemes have generated substantial inflows of skilled professionals. There is, however, a growing risk of mismatch between the volume and composition of talent arriving and the availability of commensurate employment opportunities. Where arriving professionals cannot secure roles that reflect their skills and expectations, retention suffers, the credibility of the admission schemes is eroded, and the public narrative around talent policy becomes harder to sustain.

We recommend that InvestHK and the relevant bureaux pair the talent admission schemes with a proactive company attraction strategy targeting multinational headquarters, innovation-driven firms, and regional operating units capable of generating high-value employment at scale.

This should include sector-specific workforce planning aligned with the Northern Metropolis and the priority industries identified elsewhere in this submission, so that enterprise attraction and infrastructure development proceed in step rather than in sequence.

We further recommend transparent reporting on employment absorption across the talent schemes, including the proportion of arrivals in employment commensurate with their qualifications at 12 and 24 months, to inform future calibration of admission volumes and sector targeting.

PART 4: HEALTHCARE, LIFE SCIENCES AND BIOMEDICAL INNOVATION

Australia's healthcare and life sciences sector is globally respected for the quality of its clinical research, the depth of its pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries, and the rigour of its regulatory frameworks. Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration is recognised by Hong Kong's Department of Health as a reference regulatory authority for pharmaceutical registration purposes. This recognition creates a direct and commercially valuable foundation for Australian pharmaceutical and medical device companies to access Hong Kong and, through Hong Kong, the broader Chinese Mainland market.

4.1 Build on Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) Reference Recognition and Extend It to Medical Devices

We recommend the Government work with the Department of Health to build on the existing recognition of the TGA as a reference regulatory authority by establishing a genuinely expedited registration track for products holding current TGA approval, with published service standards and timelines.

We further recommend extending reference recognition explicitly to Class III medical devices and advanced therapy medicinal products, categories where Australian innovation is particularly strong and where the current regulatory pathway creates unnecessary delays that disadvantage both Australian companies and Hong Kong patients.

Enhanced data exclusivity protections, as proposed in other chambers' submissions, are strongly endorsed by AustCham. **We further recommend** that any data exclusivity extension for locally conducted clinical trials be structured to explicitly incentivise trials conducted in collaboration with Australian research institutions and hospitals, reflecting the depth of the existing bilateral clinical research relationship.

4.2 Establish a Hong Kong-Australia Precision Medicine and Digital Health Collaboration Hub

Australia's investment in precision medicine infrastructure, including Australian Genomics and the national My Health Record digital health platform, positions it as a natural partner for Hong Kong's ambition to develop a world-class biomedical innovation ecosystem.

A structured collaboration hub, co-located with the Hong Kong Science Park's InnoLife cluster and formally linked to at least two Australian universities with strong biomedical research programmes, would accelerate the commercialisation of jointly developed intellectual property while providing Australian life sciences companies with a credible pathway to Chinese Mainland clinical markets.

We recommend the Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau engage with the Australian Government's Department of Industry, Science and Resources to explore the co-funding of such a hub under the bilateral science and technology cooperation framework.

4.3 Leverage Australia's Aged Care and Senior Living Expertise for Hong Kong's Ageing Population Challenge

Australia has developed one of the world's most sophisticated aged care and senior living regulatory and operational frameworks, encompassing independent living, assisted living, residential aged care, and integrated care models across the continuum of need.

Australian operators and designers of aged care environments have extensive experience delivering facilities that achieve high clinical and quality-of-life outcomes in high-density urban settings. This expertise is directly transferable to Hong Kong's acute and growing need for non-institutional senior housing pathways.

We recommend the Government engage formally with Australian aged care operators, designers, and policy experts, connecting the Social Welfare Department and Development Bureau with Australian counterpart agencies and private operators, to inform the design of Hong Kong's proposed Senior Housing and Assisted Living regulatory framework.

PART 5: INNOVATION, TECHNOLOGY AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

Hong Kong’s “AI+” strategy correctly identifies artificial intelligence commercialisation as the centrepiece of the city’s economic transformation. AustCham’s membership includes technology companies, financial institutions deploying AI at scale, and professional services firms managing the governance and risk dimensions of AI adoption. Our perspective on this agenda is grounded in the practical experience of deploying AI in regulated industries, where Hong Kong’s competitive advantage in AI commercialisation genuinely lies.

5.1 Build a Regulated Industry AI Commercialisation and Data Governance Pathway

Hong Kong's unique competitive advantage in AI is not in foundational model development, where it cannot match the resources of the United States or the Chinese Mainland, but in the application of AI within highly regulated industries where its legal and regulatory infrastructure adds distinctive value: financial services, legal services, healthcare, and professional advisory. These are precisely the sectors where Australian enterprises operating in Hong Kong have the deepest expertise.

We recommend the Government establish a Regulated Industry AI Commercialisation Pathway: a structured programme that partners financial regulators, the Department of Health, the Department of Justice, private-sector AI developers, and regulated industry operators to co-design and fast-track the approval of AI applications in defined high-value use cases.

This programme should draw on international models such as the UK Financial Conduct Authority's Digital Sandbox and the Monetary Authority of Singapore's AI and data analytics regulatory guidance, both of which provide structured testing environments for AI applications while maintaining regulatory integrity.

Australian financial institutions and professional services firms, many of which have already deployed AI under Australian regulatory frameworks, are well placed to serve as reference implementations for such a programme, providing both technical credibility and documented evidence of regulatory compliance.

This commercialisation pathway should be supported by a modernised data governance framework. International AI businesses face an increasingly complex patchwork of data governance requirements across jurisdictions. Hong Kong's Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance, while in need of modernisation, sits within a common-law framework that is familiar and navigable for Australian and other international businesses. The city has an opportunity to position its data governance framework as a gold standard for AI-ready data infrastructure: rigorous enough to satisfy European and Australian regulatory expectations, flexible enough to enable responsible AI development, and connected enough to the Chinese Mainland's data ecosystem to provide genuine dual-market access.

We recommend the Government accelerate the review and update of the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance to align it explicitly with international best practice, including GDPR-style accountability principles and relevant Australian Privacy Act reform directions, while preserving the distinctive aspects of Hong Kong's framework that facilitate cross-boundary data flows under existing arrangements with the Chinese Mainland. A modernised data governance framework is not a compliance cost. It is a commercial asset that would help position Hong Kong as a premium AI development and deployment jurisdiction for international businesses.

5.2 Address AI-Driven Disruption of the Graduate Employment Pipeline

The displacement of entry-level professional roles by AI automation is not a future risk: it is a present reality affecting Hong Kong's graduate employment market.

The consequence, if left unaddressed, is not simply a short-term unemployment problem. It is a structural degradation of Hong Kong's human capital pipeline, as the apprenticeship model through which professional expertise has historically been transmitted from senior to junior practitioners is disrupted at its foundation.

We recommend the Government introduce a Graduate AI Partnership Programme under which businesses receive a tax credit calibrated to offset approximately 30% of the salary cost of each local graduate in their first two years of employment, conditional on the firm maintaining a structured graduate intake, providing documented mentorship, and delivering certified training in AI-augmented professional workflows. This creates a genuine financial incentive for firms to sustain graduate hiring despite the availability of AI alternatives for routine tasks, and ensures Hong Kong develops professionals capable of supervising and governing AI systems rather than merely consuming them. AustCham members in financial and professional services have indicated strong willingness to participate in such a programme, provided the administrative burden is kept proportionate.

PART 6: BILATERAL TRADE, INVESTMENT FACILITATION, THE SME ECOSYSTEM AND GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT

The Australia-Hong Kong Free Trade Agreement, which entered into force in January 2020, remains one of the most commercially significant trade agreements either jurisdiction has concluded in the Asia-Pacific region. However, AustCham's assessment is that the agreement's commercial potential has not been fully realised, principally because awareness of its provisions among SMEs on both sides is limited and the mechanisms for resolving trade facilitation issues are underutilised.

6.1 Activate the Australia-Hong Kong Free Trade Agreement for SME Benefit

We recommend the Government instruct the Trade and Industry Department to develop and deploy a dedicated AHKFTA SME Activation Programme: a structured initiative that provides Hong Kong-based SMEs with clear, practical guidance on how to use the agreement's provisions to access Australian markets, and that provides Australian-affiliated SMEs in Hong Kong with equivalent guidance on leveraging the agreement for Chinese Mainland market access via Hong Kong's entrepôt function.

The programme should be designed in partnership with AustCham and Austrade and should include a digital self-assessment tool that allows SMEs to identify the AHKFTA provisions most relevant to their business, a directory of service providers specialising in AHKFTA compliance and structuring, and a bilateral business matchmaking function facilitated jointly by AustCham Hong Kong and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

6.2 Reform SME Financing Frameworks to Reflect Contemporary Business Realities

AustCham supports updating the SME definition to incorporate multi-factor thresholds including annual turnover, years of operation, and employee count. The current 50-employee headcount threshold, unchanged since 1994, fails to capture the economic reality of Australian-affiliated businesses in Hong Kong, many of which are asset-light, highly productive, and deeply internationally connected service businesses that fall outside the current definition despite having genuine capital access constraints.

We recommend that the Government create a specific financing track under the BUD Fund and the SME Financing Guarantee Scheme for businesses engaged in bilateral trade facilitation activities covered by Hong Kong's free trade agreements, including the AHKFTA. The administrative requirement to obtain multiple competing quotes should be replaced with a pre-approved panel of service providers for specific categories of bilateral trade facilitation expenditure, reducing the administrative burden while maintaining quality assurance.

6.3 Strengthen and Actively Market Hong Kong's Common-Law Dispute Resolution Infrastructure

Hong Kong's common-law dispute resolution framework, comprising its courts, its arbitration institutions, and its internationally recognised legal profession, is a foundational competitive advantage that cannot easily be replicated by competitor jurisdictions in the near term. For Australian businesses, the familiarity of Hong Kong's legal system is not merely a comfort factor; it is a material commercial consideration in decisions about where to structure regional operations and where to seat contractual arbitration clauses. Australian corporates consistently identify Hong Kong's common-law arbitration environment as a decisive factor in choosing structuring jurisdictions for Chinese Mainland-related investments. Capital follows legal certainty, and Hong Kong's advantage in this domain must be actively marketed rather than assumed.

We recommend the Policy Address give clear and prominent expression to the Government's continued commitment to the strength, quality, and international credibility of Hong Kong's common-law judiciary and its international arbitration institutions.

We further recommend that dispute resolution positioning be integrated into InvestHK's capital markets promotion, and that the Department of Justice and the Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre undertake joint roadshows in major Australian cities, in partnership with AustCham and the Law Council of Australia, to promote Hong Kong-seated arbitration clauses in Australian-Chinese Mainland commercial agreements.

6.4 Establish a Structured Australia-Hong Kong Government-to-Government Commercial Dialogue

The bilateral relationship between Australia and Hong Kong is currently managed through a patchwork of institutional contacts rather than a single coherent strategic framework. Hong Kong's international standing is an asset in which the business community has both a direct stake and a constructive role to play, and a formalised dialogue mechanism would give both governments greater visibility over the full breadth of the relationship while creating a predictable forum for the business community to raise priority issues at the appropriate level of seniority.

We recommend the Government establish a formal, recurring Australia-Hong Kong Senior Commercial Dialogue, co-chaired at ministerial level, that convenes annually to review the bilateral commercial relationship, identify policy barriers to deeper bilateral trade and investment, and track progress against agreed action items. The dialogue should be structured to complement rather than duplicate the existing AHKFTA Joint Committee mechanism, with a specific focus on emerging sectors including clean energy, critical minerals, the digital economy, and life sciences.

PART 7: SPORTS, TOURISM AND INTERNATIONAL BRAND POSITIONING

Hong Kong’s international competitiveness is shaped not only by financial infrastructure and regulatory alignment, but by perception, narrative, and experiential appeal. Tourism, mega-events, and cultural visibility are strategic economic multipliers that reinforce capital flows, talent attraction, and bilateral commercial relationships, provided they are grounded in world-class domestic sports infrastructure, integrated planning, and fit-for-purpose regulation. Australia is a natural partner across these dimensions, given deep people-to-people ties, strong aviation connectivity, complementary seasonal travel cycles, and a globally respected sports science, high-performance, event delivery, and visitor economy ecosystem.

7.1 Embed World-Class Sporting Infrastructure and Define Hong Kong’s Role in GBA Mega-Events

The Northern Metropolis is a generational opportunity to build sporting, leisure, and high-performance infrastructure into Hong Kong’s urban fabric from the outset. The Government’s current 10-year plan includes only two existing projects within the development zone, at Tin Shui Wai and Yuen Long, underscoring the need for a more comprehensive approach.

We recommend the Government plan Northern Metropolis sporting infrastructure as an integrated network of venues meeting international competition standards, bikeways, district sporting hubs, and multi-use event spaces capable of supporting international event bids, cross-boundary GBA competitions, community sport, carnivals, exhibitions, and concerts.

The three University Town campuses should be planned on the same principle, drawing on models such as the University of Sydney and the University of Queensland, where education, residential colleges, sporting amenity, scholarships, and endowments operate as integrated talent attraction instruments. In Hong Kong, this model could be supported by family offices, corporate sponsors, and private philanthropy.

We further recommend the Government explore establishing centres of excellence in selected sports science disciplines within the New Territories North New Town. Its planned mix of tertiary institutions, sports facilities, and open space creates a natural living laboratory, with Shenzhen's prototyping ecosystem available for early-stage sport-tech testing and the Australian Institute of Sport serving as a reference model and natural institutional partner.

As discussion continues around the Greater Bay Area's long-term ambition to host major multi-sport events, Hong Kong should define its role early. Hong Kong's comparative advantages lie not only in event hosting, but in international arbitration and governance, sponsorship structuring, financial services, broadcast and media rights packaging, sports medicine, and high-performance systems. The successful co-hosting of the 15th National Games by Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao provides a powerful proof-of-concept for the staging of cross-boundary, multi-sport mega-events. It has tested facilities and infrastructure, planning and coordination mechanisms, the cross-boundary movement of athletes, officials and spectators, ticketing, promotion and publicity, broadcast arrangements, and sponsorship rights. It also demonstrates that the Greater Bay Area has the sporting and transport infrastructure needed to stage large-scale, international, multi-venue and multi-sport events.

We recommend the Government leverage the successful staging of the National Games, together with the greenfield opportunities presented by the Northern Metropolis, University Town sites, and New Territories North New Town, to work with other GBA authorities on a pipeline of major international events capable of being staged across the region. Such events would provide a ready-made platform for the integrated development of culture, sports and tourism, while helping international audiences better understand the Greater Bay Area, its role in China's national development, and Hong Kong's unique positioning, potential, and value proposition within that regional ecosystem.

We further recommend the Government work closely with other GBA authorities on the integrated planning and development of sporting, leisure, transport, event, media, broadcast, hospitality, and spectator-movement infrastructure through the specific lens of staging major multi-sport mega-events. This should include how to maximise the use of sporting and leisure infrastructure in the University Town sites and the New Territories North New Town development.

We recommend the Government commission a formal assessment of Hong Kong's optimal functional role within any future GBA mega-event framework, including the feasibility of bidding for a pipeline of major international events that could be staged across the Greater Bay Area. This assessment should engage Australian event delivery experts with operational experience across multiple Olympic and Commonwealth Games cycles. Early governance design materially reduces fiscal and reputational risk.

In parallel, we recommend structured collaboration between the Hong Kong Sports Institute and leading Australian institutes of sport, covering joint sports science research, athlete and coaching exchange pathways, sports medicine, performance analytics, and sport-tech commercialisation. This would strengthen Hong Kong's regional positioning while deepening Australia-Hong Kong institutional links beyond purely commercial activity.

7.2 Build Sports and Content Tourism into the Bilateral Marketing Strategy

Major sporting events should be treated as economic catalysts rather than standalone occasions.

We recommend the Hong Kong Tourism Board work with Australian travel partners to build targeted campaigns around flagship fixtures such as the Rugby Sevens, international tennis, cycling, and new Kai Tak events, with integrated airline, accommodation, and ticket packages aligned to key sporting dates and designed to balance seasonal travel demand.

We further recommend a Reciprocal Australia-Hong Kong Content Tourism Programme, piloted within the next fiscal cycle, supported by a dedicated HKTB Australia marketing envelope and co-investment from aviation and hospitality stakeholders. Tourism Australia has demonstrated the commercial effectiveness of celebrity-led, long-form travel content in the Hong Kong market.

Hong Kong should reciprocate by engaging prominent Australian television personalities and high-reach digital creators to undertake curated journeys through the city, distributed across Australian free-to-air television, streaming, and social media.

The objective is to reposition Hong Kong from short-stay transit hub to multi-layered experiential destination. Australian outbound travellers are long-haul, high-spending, and experience-oriented, yet Hong Kong under-indexes against Tokyo, Singapore, and Bali in Australian leisure consideration. Visibility of this kind is also economic positioning: a confident, well-branded Hong Kong attracts capital, retains talent, and strengthens the bilateral warmth that facilitates trade and investment.

7.3 Reform Event and Restaurant Licensing to Strengthen Hong Kong's Visitor Economy

AustCham welcomes the Government's commitment to mega-events and recognises the strategic value of combining Culture, Sports and Tourism under a single policy bureau.

Hong Kong's ability to compete as an international events and culinary destination, however, depends on regulatory systems that provide certainty, proportionality, and a visitor experience consistent with the city's brand. AustCham's Sports and Entertainment Committee and food and beverage members have identified four areas where targeted reform would materially reduce organisational and financial risk for operators, improve the event experience, and strengthen Hong Kong's position as a leading international destination. Australia's extensive event-hosting and hospitality experience provides directly relevant reference points.

Licensing certainty for event organisers. The absence of timely certainty over the Temporary Place of Public Entertainment Licence remains one of the most significant operational challenges facing Hong Kong's events sector.

TPPELs are frequently not issued until the day of an event, sometimes after the advertised opening time, exposing organisers and sponsors, who may have committed tens of millions of dollars, to acute operational and commercial risk, and demonstrably depressing sponsor appetite.

We recommend FEHD implement a published Performance Pledge to issue TPPELs at least one full day before an event's official opening time, underpinned by a real-time digital dashboard showing the progress of all outstanding approvals across relevant bureaux and departments, with named responsible officers and contact details. This would give organisers the visibility and escalation pathways needed to manage complex, time-sensitive events with confidence.

Food and beverage offerings at events. Event food licensing restrictions currently prevent the open-flame cooking and low-temperature frying that are standard at major events globally.

Charcoal grills, BBQ pits, and deep-fried street food such as churros, doughnuts, and hot chips are staples of event culture worldwide, and their unavailability is a material gap in the visitor experience. This runs counter to Hong Kong's food paradise brand.
We do not propose any relaxation of genuine fire safety standards. **We recommend** FEHD and the Fire Services Department establish a dedicated working group with event organisers to develop updated rules permitting, under clearly defined safety conditions, a substantially broader range of cooking methodologies at licensed events. This should be accompanied by a structured FEHD consultation with the sector on the full range of food service barriers, with a view to piloting a more internationally competitive approach.

Temporary structures. Requirements that temporary event structures meet Building Ordinance standards designed for permanent buildings, some originating in legislation dating to 1956, impose disproportionate cost, time, and administrative burdens. The impact is most acute for double-stack structures such as container hospitality units, common at major events globally but currently requiring permanent building plans in Hong Kong.

We recommend the Buildings Department engage the events sector to develop a dedicated set of practice notes for temporary event infrastructure, drawing on best-practice frameworks in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the Chinese Mainland. Safety must remain non-negotiable. The objective is a regulatory pathway proportionate to the temporary and modular nature of event structures.

Restaurant licensing. The process for obtaining a restaurant licence in Hong Kong currently requires many operators to engage specialist consultants at costs commonly ranging from HK$50,000 to HK$100,000, principally because the applicable rules and approval requirements lack sufficient clarity for applicants to navigate independently. This stands in contrast to comparable markets including Shenzhen, Singapore, and Sydney, where licensing requirements are more clearly documented and compliant designs can proceed with less reliance on paid intermediaries. For new entrants, particularly international operators assessing Hong Kong against regional alternatives, this opacity raises entry costs, constrains sector diversity, and weakens Hong Kong's culinary destination credentials.

We recommend FEHD undertake a comprehensive review of the restaurant licensing process with two objectives: first, the publication of clear, consolidated, plainly written guidance covering licensing requirements, design standards, and approval timelines, sufficient for a competent operator to prepare a compliant application without professional intermediaries; and second, the introduction of published processing timelines and a single-point enquiry function so that applicants have visibility over the progress of their applications.

These measures would align Hong Kong with international best practice, reduce entry costs for new operators, and complement the event licensing reforms proposed above.

7.4 Refine "M" Mark Funding to Attract New Major Sporting Events to Kai Tak Sports Park

Kai Tak Sports Park has transformed the scale of Hong Kong's event ambition. Realising its full potential requires a funding framework calibrated not only to sustain established annual events, for which the "M" Mark scheme has performed commendably, but to attract new events with credible international profiles and appetite for multi-year commitments.

We recommend the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau work with the Major Sports Events Committee to refine the "M" Mark scheme by designing a dedicated funding pathway for internationally established new events, under which first-year support, weighted toward marketing and promotion in key international source markets, is set at a materially higher level, tapering through years two and three as the event builds its Hong Kong audience and commercial base. The first edition of any event in a new market carries disproportionate launch risk; a transparent front-loaded model addresses this asymmetry directly and gives international sports IP owners the confidence to commit. Special consideration should be given to events capable of three-to-five-year commitments, which create more durable economic and brand benefits than one-off fixtures.

Australia's National Rugby League, which commands a substantial global following and has demonstrated successful international market entry through its Las Vegas round, is the type of property this framework is designed to attract.

7.5 Leverage the 2027 Rugby World Cup in Australia as a Platform for Hong Kong Promotion

The Men's Rugby World Cup, to be held in Australia from 1 October to 13 November 2027, will be the largest single sporting event in the world that year. For the first time in history, the Hong Kong China Men's team has qualified, drawn in Pool A alongside host nation Australia, New Zealand, and Chile. Hong Kong China (HKC) opens against Australia on 1 October 2027 in Perth before an expected crowd of 65,000 and a substantial global broadcast audience, a fixture falling on the National Day of the People's Republic of China, within the 30th anniversary year of the establishment of the HKSAR, giving the occasion considerable symbolic weight.

Further fixtures follow in Townsville and Melbourne, while Sydney, where the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office (HKETO), InvestHK, HKTB, and HKTDC all maintain offices, hosts the quarter-finals through to the final, offering sustained high-visibility engagement. The tournament is also a compelling vehicle for the kangaroo-route corridor, converting tournament-driven travel to Australia into onward or return visitation to Hong Kong, particularly among European travellers who regularly combine both destinations.

We recommend the Government establish a dedicated Cross-Bureau Working Group to develop and execute a coordinated Hong Kong presence strategy across the tournament, comprising the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau, Hong Kong China Rugby, the Hong Kong Tourism Board, InvestHK, the HKTDC, Cathay Pacific, and AustCham Hong Kong. Its mandate should cover targeted activations in the four host cities, engagement of both visitor and business markets, and integrated kangaroo-route tourism packages.

AustCham is well placed to support the Working Group's engagement with Australian commercial, community, and government stakeholders through our established networks across Australian markets.

7.6 Develop Premium Culinary Tourism Through Expanded Public Programming at the Chinese Culinary Institute

Food is one of Hong Kong's strongest visitor propositions and a defining element of its international identity. The Chinese Culinary Institute, part of the Vocational Training Council, is a world-class facility that serves an important function in professional culinary training. It currently operates significantly below capacity, representing an underutilised public asset at a time when Hong Kong is seeking to deepen its experiential tourism offer.

We recommend the Government work with the Vocational Training Council to develop a premium short-course programme at the Chinese Culinary Institute open to the public, delivered in multiple languages including English and Putonghua, and targeted at international visitors, corporate groups, and residents. Programmes of this kind have proven commercially successful in other culinary destinations and would allow Hong Kong to convert an existing world-class asset into a new category of tourism product at minimal incremental capital cost.

Such an initiative would complement the city's food-paradise positioning, generate direct revenue for a public institution, and create a distinctive visitor experience that competing destinations cannot easily replicate. It would also sit naturally alongside the event food and beverage reforms proposed in Section 7.3, reinforcing Hong Kong's culinary credentials across both the visitor economy and the professional training system.

PART 8: THE NORTHERN METROPOLIS AS AN INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC ENGINE

The Northern Metropolis is the single largest spatial and economic development initiative in Hong Kong’s recent history, and the physical anchor for many of the ambitions set out in the First Five-Year Plan. Its success will ultimately be measured not by land released or buildings delivered, but by the industries it anchors, the jobs it creates, the talent it retains, and the innovation it commercialises.

For the Northern Metropolis to succeed, it must be more than a land supply programme. It must operate as a coherent economic platform anchored in defined innovation sectors, supported by liveable communities, governed through transparent delivery structures, and made investable through land, tenure, infrastructure, and partnership models that match the time horizons of private capital.

We recommend that the Northern Metropolis be anchored in clearly defined sector focus areas, prioritising technology, healthcare and life sciences, artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, and high-end professional services. This sector strategy must be matched by liveability from the outset, with housing, schooling, healthcare, community infrastructure, and recreational amenity planned as integrated components of the development model rather than as subsequent phases.

This should include early provision for international school capacity, consistent with the pressures identified in Section 3.3 and the recommendation concerning an additional AISHK campus; healthcare facilities matched to the planned population; and community and recreational amenity of the standard set out in Part 7.

Australian firms bring directly relevant experience across large-scale urban development, health and education precincts, innovation district delivery, infrastructure PPPs, and liveability-led place making. AustCham would welcome the opportunity to connect the Development Bureau and relevant bureaux with Australian operators and advisers as the Northern Metropolis delivery model is refined.

Parts 3, 4, 5, and 7 of this submission address specific dimensions of the Northern Metropolis agenda, including international schooling, biomedical clustering, artificial intelligence, sports science, and research infrastructure. This Part addresses the Northern Metropolis development model as a whole, covering cross-boundary regulatory sandboxes, park platform governance, land disposal reform, long-term roadmap transparency, PPP coordination, and University Town development.

8.1 Establish Cross-Boundary Regulatory Sandboxes in the Northern Metropolis

The Northern Metropolis's proximity to Shenzhen and its position within the Greater Bay Area make it the natural location for deeper regulatory experimentation. **We recommend** the establishment of cross-boundary regulatory sandboxes within the Northern Metropolis to facilitate collaboration in data, fintech, healthcare, and AI between Hong Kong and Chinese Mainland Greater Bay Area jurisdictions.

Such sandboxes would allow new products, services, and data-sharing arrangements to be tested under supervised conditions before wider deployment, extending the logic of the AI commercialisation pathway proposed in Section 5.1 and the health innovation agenda in Part 4 into the cross-boundary environment where the greatest scale lies.

8.2 Consolidate Park Platform Governance and Restore Direct Land Interests as an Investment Option

The Northern Metropolis has produced, in rapid succession, four distinct park governance structures: the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation, the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park, the Hung Shui Kiu Industry Park Company, and the San Tin Technopole Company, each with its own mandate, funding requirements, and relationship with government.

The expertise, tenant networks, and operational credibility that existing operators such as HKSTP and HSITP have spent years developing would be better deployed by extending their footprints into new precincts than by creating parallel structures alongside them. The shift toward sub-lease arrangements across several precincts, especially under the San Tin Technopole Company, compounds this concern.

An enterprise that holds a direct Government lease over its site in San Tin today will be in a materially different financial position in 2040 than one that sub-leases the same site: the capital appreciation case for early entry is compelling, but only where enterprises can hold the land interest.

We recommend the Government assign each Northern Metropolis precinct to a designated existing park operator, with publicly defined mandates, funding requirements, and performance benchmarks, rather than creating additional statutory bodies unless a clear market failure or capability gap is demonstrated.

Concurrently, **we recommend** the introduction of a dual-track tenure model: sub-lease arrangements for smaller occupiers and start-ups, and direct Government renewable leases for qualifying enterprises above a defined minimum investment threshold. Park operators would retain their infrastructure management and platform curation roles.

8.3 Adopt a Rolling Tender Model for Northern Metropolis Land Disposal

Fixed-deadline tender cycles are ill-suited to the investment decisions the Northern Metropolis is designed to attract. Due diligence for a capital-intensive I&T facility, biomedical campus, advanced manufacturing facility, logistics asset, or data centre routinely spans 12 to 24 months. Where a tender deadline falls before an investor's evaluation is complete, the result is an aborted process, not a faster commitment. The void between tender rounds allows active interest to dissipate and competing jurisdictions to advance.

The Hung Shui Kiu large-scale land disposal programme demonstrated the depth of market interest that emerges when investors are given adequate time and engagement. The current model risks suppressing rather than capturing that depth.

We recommend the Government pilot a rolling tender model for a defined tranche of Northern Metropolis industrial, logistics, and I&T sites, under which sites are listed on nm.gov.hk with a minimum assessment period but no fixed submission deadline.
Investor enquiries should be handled through a dedicated engagement function within the Development Bureau; qualified applicants should be able to submit when their evaluation is complete; and the Government should assess submissions on a rolling basis against pre-published criteria.

This approach would capture market momentum in real time, eliminate void periods, and signal to international investors that Hong Kong is prepared to meet private capital where it is.

8.4 Publish a Development Roadmap to 2040 and a Comprehensive Land Availability Schedule

An enterprise evaluating a commitment in San Tin Technopole or Ngau Tam Mei is making a 15-to-20-year decision. The Five-Year Plan horizon does not provide sufficient directional certainty for investors to underwrite that commitment.

The single most frequently cited structural barrier in AustCham's engagement with members who have evaluated Northern Metropolis opportunities and declined to proceed is the absence of visibility beyond 2030, covering precinct sequencing, transport infrastructure delivery, and the Government's long-term position on I&T land supply.

The nm.gov.hk platform is a useful news and zone-level channel, but it does not yet provide the site-level operational data investors and their advisers need to conduct feasibility planning.

We recommend the Government publish a Northern Metropolis Development Roadmap extending to at least 2040, on an indicative rather than binding basis, updated on a regular cycle. **We further recommend** the establishment of a Northern Metropolis Land Availability Schedule, updated quarterly on nm.gov.hk, covering all industrial, I&T, and commercial sites for the following five years.

Each entry should include site location, area, designated use, development status, resumption progress, site formation status, infrastructure readiness, tenure type, named park operator where applicable, intended disposal method, indicative availability date, and whether a direct land interest is permitted.

The Lands Department's land sales programme already delivers this discipline for residential and commercial land. The Northern Metropolis pipeline, spanning multiple agencies, tenure models, and park operators, requires the same transparency applied to industrial and innovation land.

8.5 Establish a Cross-Government Business Incentive and PPP Coordination Unit

Multiple bureaux are simultaneously pursuing public-private partnership projects across transport, innovation infrastructure, logistics, and community facilities, without a coordinating function to standardise commercial feasibility assessment, calibrate incentive structures to the operators being targeted, or capture institutional knowledge from projects that succeed, stall, or fail. Lessons from one bureau's experience do not consistently reach another, and the same structural errors risk recurring.

A further issue requires direct attention: the assumption that land development rights constitute an adequate private-sector return is no longer sound for all project types. Land values in the New Territories have declined materially from their peak, and the infrastructure operators Hong Kong most needs, including new rail concessionaires, smart mobility corridor providers, and autonomous logistics platform operators, are not primarily in the business of property development. Offering them land rights as compensation risks misreading their commercial model and discouraging the partners the programme requires.

We recommend the Government establish a Business Incentive and PPP Unit with a cross-bureau mandate, housed within the Development Bureau or the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, with four core responsibilities:

1. commercial feasibility assessment before schemes are offered to market;
2. funding model diversification, including operating subsidies, minimum revenue guarantees, viability gap funding, and government co-investment, for projects where land provision is not a viable return;
3. active pre-tender engagement with prospective private partners; and
4. an institutional PPP case library, accessible to all bureaux, capturing terms, decision points, and lessons from every significant PPP project undertaken by any Hong Kong government authority.

Australia's infrastructure PPP market is among the most sophisticated in the Asia-Pacific region, and AustCham would welcome the opportunity to connect the relevant bureaux with Australian PPP practitioners as the unit's operating model is designed.

8.6 Build a Genuinely International and Academically Diverse University Town
The Northern Metropolis University Town risks delivering an expansion of existing Hong Kong university capacity rather than the qualitative transformation the programme's ambitions require. The university districts that have generated durable economic and talent outcomes, from Research Triangle Park to Macquarie Park to the Lund-Malmö knowledge corridor, derive their vitality from the juxtaposition of different institutional cultures, research traditions, and international networks. A precinct anchored entirely by institutions that already exist in Hong Kong replicates what Hong Kong has; it does not create what Hong Kong needs.

We recommend the Education Bureau and Development Bureau launch a proactive international university attraction programme, inviting internationally ranked foreign universities to establish full, degree-granting, research-active residential campuses within the University Town, on land allocation terms competitive with Singapore, Malaysia, and the Chinese Mainland.

Australian universities are a natural priority for early engagement given their established Hong Kong relationships, and AustCham is willing to facilitate direct connections with Australian university leadership within the 2026-27 policy cycle.

The University Town should also actively recruit specialist institutions absent from Hong Kong's current landscape, in sports science, performing arts, and design, to create a differentiated identity that no other tertiary precinct in the region can replicate and to deliver the specialist research infrastructure, coaching professionals, and creative workforce referenced in Parts 7 and 8.

We further recommend that the University Town's open space and leisure infrastructure includes a championship-standard golf course, planned as an integrated component of the precinct's sporting network rather than as a standalone commercial development. Demand for corporate and community golf access in Hong Kong substantially exceeds current capacity relative to the scale of its business community.

A well-connected course within the Northern Metropolis would serve as a learning ground for sports-related students, a business attraction asset, a corporate engagement venue, and a liveability anchor for the senior professionals and international families the precinct needs to retain.

PART 9: URBAN RENEWAL AND THE REDEVELOPMENT OF AGED PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES

9.1 Mobilise Private Capital for Public Housing Estate Regeneration

Hong Kong faces a growing need to regenerate ageing public housing estates, many of which were developed several decades ago and require substantial reinvestment or redevelopment. Given the scale of the challenge, greater private-sector participation should be encouraged to supplement public funding and accelerate estate renewal.

We recommend that the Government establish a framework enabling private investors to participate in public housing redevelopment projects in exchange for ownership or other long-term interests in the commercial, retail and car parking components of the development. Additional incentives, including plot ratio enhancements where appropriate, may further improve project viability and attract investment.

To support such partnerships, the Government should review restrictions contained in Deeds of Mutual Covenant (DMCs), Government Leases, Master Layout Plans and related approval documents. Current requirements often prescribe the exact location, size and user type of welfare facilities, limiting their ability to adapt to changing community needs and market conditions.
Regulatory controls should focus on maintaining the overall provision and quality of welfare and community services, rather than mandating their precise location or user. Greater flexibility should be permitted in relation to layout, alienation, ownership structure and future reconfiguration.

This is particularly important for estates where shopping centres and car parks have already been transferred to private ownership. Legacy restrictions should be reviewed and rationalised where public policy objectives can continue to be met, enabling refurbishment, redevelopment and reinvestment that support the long-term sustainability and vitality of public housing communities.

MEASURING SUCCESS

To support evaluation of these recommendations over the Plan period, we propose that the Government track a small set of indicative metrics:

- the value of Australian institutional capital allocated to Hong Kong-listed and Hong Kong-structured assets;
- venture capital raised and deployed by Hong Kong-domiciled funds; the number of ASX-HKEX dual listings and new resource-sector listings; median registration time for TGA-approved therapeutic products;
- the 24-month retention rate of arrivals under the talent admission schemes;
- employment absorption rates across the talent admission schemes;
- TPPEL issuance timeliness against the proposed Performance Pledge;
- Australian visitor arrivals and average length of stay; median restaurant licence processing time following the reforms proposed in Section 7.3;
- the number of sites listed on the Northern Metropolis Land Availability Schedule and average time-to-disposal under the rolling tender pilot; and
- the number of aged public housing estates entering regeneration under the plot ratio incentive framework. AustCham would welcome the opportunity to agree baseline figures with the relevant bureaux.

CONCLUSION

Hong Kong offers Australian businesses a combination no other city can: a common-law framework, deep capital markets, and unmediated access to the Chinese Mainland's economy. Australia offers Hong Kong a combination no other bilateral partner can replicate: resource endowment, institutional credibility, educational depth, and Pacific-region market relationships. The proposals in this submission are the areas where, in our assessment, that mutual value is most readily unlocked through targeted policy action. AustCham looks forward to discussing them with the Chief Executive, the relevant Secretaries of Bureaux, and the Chief Executive's Policy Unit.