1 September 2026

Dear Members,

Something quietly historic happened in Hong Kong last month, and many people may have missed it.

On 12 August, the first regulated Hong Kong dollar stablecoin started moving real money. It is called HKDAP, issued by Anchorpoint Financial, a joint venture led by Standard Chartered with HKT and Animoca Brands. In plain terms: a digital token, pegged one-to-one to the Hong Kong dollar, fully backed by reserves held in trust, and licensed by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority. For now, it is available only to institutions and professional investors. HSBC, the only other licensed issuer, plans to launch its own version later this year through PayMe and its mobile banking app, which would put regulated digital money in the hands of everyday users.

Forget the word "crypto" for a moment because that is not what this is. This is about how money moves. A regulated stablecoin is simply a faster, programmable Hong Kong dollar, one that can settle a cross-border payment in minutes rather than days, at a fraction of the cost. If you have ever waited on a payment to clear with a Mainland supplier, or watched fees stack up on a regional treasury transfer, this is especially relevant to you.

What I find most interesting is how Hong Kong got here. Thirty-six firms applied for a stablecoin licence. Two got one. Some called that too cautious. I would put it differently: in digital money, trust is the entire product. A licence that only two applicants could pass tells the world that a Hong Kong-regulated stablecoin actually means something. Compare that with the string of collapses elsewhere in recent years, and the caution starts to make more sense and look like strategy.

Of course, careful rules only matter if people use what they permit. The early phase is deliberately narrow: no retail access yet, limited public data on usage, and two issuers betting on very different futures, one building settlement rails for institutions, the other going straight for consumer payments. The next twelve months will tell us whether this becomes real financial infrastructure or stays a well-regulated experiment. My money, so to speak, is on the former, but the honest answer is that nobody knows yet.

There is an Australian angle worth watching too. Canberra is developing its own approach to regulating digital money, and Australian banks, payment providers and fintechs are studying how Hong Kong's framework performs in practice. Members sit at the intersection of both systems, which is exactly where the interesting conversations will happen. As it happens, our Chairman Jason Chang and I will be in Canberra next week for the Chamber's annual door knock, meeting with government, opposition and officials across Treasury and DFAT, and how the two systems can learn from each other is firmly on our list. Members sit at the intersection of both systems, which is exactly where the interesting conversations will happen.

So here is my question for you, and I mean it as a genuine one: if your bank offered you regulated digital Hong Kong dollars tomorrow, would your business use them? For what? And if the answer is no, what would need to change? Forward this to your treasury or payments team and ask them. I suspect the answers will be more varied, and more revealing, than you expect.

If you are already exploring digital assets or payments innovation, or you can see obstacles in the current framework, I would love to hear from you at austcham@austcham.com.hk. The best insights the Chamber takes to regulators always start as a member saying, "here is what actually happens in our business."

Hong Kong has spent years building the rules. The interesting part now is what businesses do with them: whether regulated digital money can make payments faster, settlement easier and Hong Kong a more useful place from which to operate across the region.

Warm regards,
Mary Simpson, AustCham Hong Kong Chief Executive