



6 October 2026

Dear Members,

It has been quite a fortnight of sport. Hong Kong, China's largest-ever Asian Games team has returned from Aichi-Nagoya with a record-breaking performance, including 11 gold medals and a place inside the top 10 on the medal table. That is a remarkable achievement for the city, and a reminder of how far Hong Kong sport has come across both elite competition and community participation. The Hong Kong Jockey Club has also announced HK\$37.5 million in awards for medallists, underlining the breadth of support behind our athletes.

And in Australia, the NRL season was decided at Accor Stadium on Sunday night, with the Sydney Roosters edging the Newcastle Knights 19–18 in a nail-biting Grand Final that more than lived up to the occasion. Congratulations or commiserations, depending on your colours. For many Australians in Hong Kong, it was exactly the kind of match that brings home a little closer: the early messages, the group chats, the replay watched over coffee, and the inevitable arguments about the call that should or should not have gone the other way.

This week, that feels like the right place to start: sport, entertainment, and the role they play in a city's identity.

The timing is more than sentimental. The 2026 Policy Address and Hong Kong's first Five-Year Plan both make clear that sport is no longer being treated simply as recreation. It is now part of the city's economic, tourism and international positioning strategy. The Five-Year Plan commits Hong Kong to deepen the integrated development of culture, sports and tourism, maintain the city as a centre for major international sports events, and develop sport as an industry. It also sets measurable ambitions: a 20 per cent cumulative increase in resources allocated to sports development, a 20 per cent increase in full-time elite athletes, and 10 per cent growth in the value added of sports and related activities over the next five years.

The Policy Address gives that strategy a practical shape, with Kai Tak Sports Park at the centre. Since opening, Kai Tak has hosted more than 170 sessions of international and local sports and cultural entertainment mega events, attracting more than 2.6 million spectators, and the Government says the main stadium achieved the highest gross revenue and ticket sales in Asia in 2025. The Policy Address also points to a study on redeveloping Victoria Park Centre Court into an all-weather, multi-purpose venue, a new Sports Executive Training Programme, stronger governance requirements for National Sports Associations, and continued support for Hong Kong as a host of major international events.

For AustCham members, this matters because sport and entertainment are not standalone sectors. They touch tourism, hospitality, transport, media, sponsorship, professional services, digital platforms, security, construction, health, community participation and more. When a major event works, a whole network of businesses and institutions works behind it.

That is exactly the point AustCham made in our member briefing on the Policy Address and the Five-Year Plan. Our submission asked the Government to treat tourism, sport, and events as part of Hong Kong's competitiveness agenda. We assessed the Government's response as directionally aligned: there is strong ambition around sports resources, mega events, Kai Tak, tourism value-added and Greater Bay Area co-operation, even if some of our more specific asks including licensing reform, "M" Mark redesign and a Rugby World Cup working group were not addressed.

The next task is to turn that ambition into an operating environment that works in practice. Members in the sector know that a successful events economy is not built only on stadiums. It also depends on the less glamorous but essential things: licensing that is clear and timely, temporary event approvals that are proportionate, transport plans that work for late-night crowds, food and beverage rules that allow operators to respond commercially, and a visitor experience that begins before the ticket is scanned and continues long after people leave the venue.

This is where our Sports and Entertainment Committee has a real role to play. Hong Kong now has the hardware, and increasingly the ambition, to compete as a regional sports and live entertainment hub. What we need to help shape is the operating environment: the rules, partnerships, commercial models, and international connections that allow the city to keep attracting events and make the most of them when they arrive.

It is also a timely moment to congratulate **James Irvine**, co-chair of AustCham's Sports and Entertainment Committee alongside **Brett Free**, on his recent appointment as **Chief Commercial Officer of Hong Kong China Rugby**. Rugby is one of Hong Kong's most internationally recognised sporting platforms, and James' new role further strengthens the connection between the Chamber, our members and the city's major-event, sponsorship and sports-commercialisation landscape. We also thank Brett for his contribution as an outgoing director of Hong Kong China Rugby and we look forward to his continued leadership of AustCham's Sports and Entertainment Committee.

There is a natural Australian angle here. Australia has deep experience in major event delivery, venue operations, sports governance, high-performance systems, broadcasting, sponsorship, fan engagement, and community sport. From rugby league and rugby union to racing, tennis, cricket, swimming, football, netball and the Olympics and Paralympics, Australia has built a sophisticated sports economy over many decades. Hong Kong's current direction creates opportunities for that expertise to be shared, adapted, and commercialised here.

It is also an important moment for regional co-operation. The Five-Year Plan refers to the Greater Bay Area as a platform for co-organising major sports leagues and international single-sport events, and the Policy Address confirms continued support for Greater Bay Area leagues. That should be of interest to any Australian sporting property, rights-holder, sponsor, or event operator thinking about Hong Kong not just as a one-off stop, but as a gateway to a wider regional audience.

There are immediate examples around us. Kai Tak Sports Park has been used as a city-wide cheer zone for the Asian Games, with live broadcasts, community activities and an Asian Games-themed light show running through October. Later this month, the Hong Kong Slam will bring professional pickleball to Kai Tak as part of the PPA Tour Asia season, another example of how quickly the city's events calendar is diversifying.

The wider tourism targets are also significant. The Five-Year Plan aims to lift the value added of the tourism industry from HK\$86.2 billion in 2024 to HK\$126 billion by 2030, and to increase the share of non-Mainland overnight visitors to 40 per cent by 2030. Major sport and entertainment events will be one of the ways Hong Kong tries to achieve that, particularly when they are linked to restaurants, hotels, retail, nightlife, and multi-destination travel.

For the Chamber, the next step is practical. Through the Sports and Entertainment Committee, we will continue gathering member evidence on where the system works and where it does not: the cost and timing of event approvals, the commercial viability of multi-year fixtures, the opportunities for Australian sports organisations and event specialists, and the reforms that would make Hong Kong more competitive as an event destination.

Sport has a way of making cities feel alive. It brings people together across backgrounds, industries, and nationalities. At its best, it fills hotels, restaurants, and stadiums; just as importantly, it gives people a reason to gather, to cheer, to belong, and to see the city at its most energetic.

That is good for Hong Kong. And it is good for the AustCham community.

Warm regards,
Mary Simpson, AustCham Hong Kong Chief Executive