



20 October 2026

Dear Members,

This week, I want to focus on one of Hong Kong's great calling cards: hospitality.

Food, beverage and hotels are the front of house of this city. For a first-time visitor, a conference guest or an old Hong Kong hand showing friends around town, impressions are often formed not in a boardroom, but around a table. In Hong Kong, that table might be in a bustling dim sum hall, at a family-run dai pai dong, beside a late-night bowl of noodles, over perfectly poured coffee between meetings, at a world-class cocktail bar or in a harbourfront dining room. The city's hospitality is eclectic and original because it moves so easily between local and international, informal and refined, familiar and surprising. These are the moments people remember, and they help shape Hong Kong's reputation as a place to visit, work, invest in and return to.

That ability to make people feel welcome matters in business as much as in leisure. With Hong Kong hosting the APEC Finance Ministers' Meeting for the first time this week, our hospitality sector will once again help shape the impressions international visitors take home.

That strength has just been recognised on the world stage. Last month in Paris, Rosewood Hong Kong was named the world's number one hotel for the second year running at The 50 Best Hotels awards, as well as Best Hotel in Asia. For a property that opened only in 2019, that is a remarkable achievement. And the hotel at the very top is ours: on our harbourfront, staffed by people who live and work in this city. Hong Kong does not always get the credit it deserves as a hospitality destination, and recognition like this should be a real source of pride.

There is a strong Australian thread running through the story too. Rosewood is part of the Rosewood Hotel Group, owned by Chow Tai Fook Enterprises, a long-standing Platinum Patron of the Chamber. In March, CTFE and Far East Consortium became equal owners of Destination Brisbane Consortium, the company behind Brisbane's Queen's Wharf integrated resort, following the acquisition of Star Entertainment's ownership stake. The group behind Hong Kong's world-leading hotel is also investing deeply in Queensland. That is exactly the kind of two-way relationship the Chamber exists to support.

The Australian thread runs through the kitchens of Hong Kong too, and here I will confess a personal interest. I grew up in Darwin, where barramundi is not so much a menu item as a way of life. So I am delighted that Humpty Doo Barramundi (and yes, Humpty Doo is a real place) is finding its way onto Hong Kong menus. This family-owned producer raises premium saltwater barramundi alongside the Adelaide River in the Northern Territory, halfway between Darwin and Kakadu National Park. The business accounts for roughly half of Australia's barramundi production and has been growing sales in Hong Kong and other export markets since 2018. This year, it was named ASC Best Responsible Seafood Producer at the Sustainable Seafood Awards Australia.

There is something wonderful about seeing a fish I remember catching on family camping trips now arriving at Hong Kong tables as a premium Australian product. It is a small story, but it says a great deal about what Australian producers can achieve in this market when quality and provenance are the selling points.

For our members in the sector, I know the picture is more complicated than one award suggests. Rents, staffing and shifting spending patterns have made the past few years hard going for many operators, and the northbound weekend trend has been a real challenge for restaurants and bars in particular. Hong Kong will never win a discounting contest with Shenzhen, and it should not try. Its edge is in the experience, the quality and the people.

That is precisely why our **Food, Beverage and Hospitality Committee** matters. Its members are on the front line of these questions every day, and the Committee gives them a place to compare notes, raise issues with government and showcase what Australian producers and operators bring to this market. From the Barossa to Margaret River, from Tasmanian cherries and seafood to Queensland beef and bananas, and yes, Territory barra, Australian produce is on menus across the city. There is plenty to celebrate: Queensland's Paradigm Foods took the World's Best Steak title with its Senku Pure Wagyu fillet, while Jack's Creek, entered with Albers, won World's Best Wagyu at this year's World Steak Challenge. These are distinct awards, but together they are a wonderful endorsement of Australian beef and the producers behind it.

I am also delighted to share that the Committee has two new Co-Chairs. But before I introduce them, I want to pay tribute to the two people handing over the reins. **Abby Cadman and Dean Aslin** have given an enormous amount of time and energy to this Committee, and they have done it while running demanding businesses of their own. Abby, as CEO of Feste Group, has been behind more of Hong Kong's best-catered events than most of us realise, and Dean's knowledge of the wine, beer and spirits trade in this city is second to none. Between them, they kept the Committee active, relevant and useful through some genuinely difficult years for the sector. On behalf of the Board and the whole membership, thank you both.

It says something about the strength of this Chamber's community that we can follow one restaurateur and wine specialist with another. **Dr Jonathan Sutton** is Partner and Chief Operating Officer at Hidden Gem Restaurants and Steak King Market, the group behind Flat Iron Steak, Flat Iron Burger, Picanhas, The Lasagna Factory, Punjab Warriors, Powder Monkey Bar and the newly opened Yakiniku. He is that rare combination of academic and operator, with a hospitality recruitment platform, a specialty coffee roastery and one of Vietnam's top-ranked cocktail bars also to his name. Jonathan understands the economics of a Hong Kong dining room from the inside because he lives them every day.

Jonathan is also hosting private tastings in Hong Kong later this month featuring Jack's Creek's award-winning Wagyu. All places are now filled, so if you've secured an invitation, well done, and enjoy a taste of the World's Best Wagyu!

Gary Chu brings the other half of the table. He introduced Laithwaites Direct Wines to Hong Kong in 2010 and went on to establish the brand in Taiwan and China, building a direct-to-consumer model that has made wine approachable for thousands of drinkers. He holds WSET Level 3 and an MBA and has a gift for talking about wine that is relaxed, generous and entirely free of snobbery. He is also CEO of ECL Logistics, with more than 25 years in contract logistics, so he understands not just what ends up in the glass, but every step of how it got there.

Between a restaurateur and a wine man who runs a logistics company, the Committee has both the front of house and the back of house covered. I know Jonathan and Gary have plenty of ideas for the year ahead, and I would encourage any member with an interest in the sector, whether as an operator, a supplier or simply a keen diner, to get involved.

As we head into the rest of October, I wish you all a productive week, and I hope you find time to enjoy some of what makes this city such a great place to eat, drink and stay. If you happen to spot barramundi on a menu, or an Australian label at Hong Kong's upcoming Wine & Dine Festival, you will know where my vote goes.

Warm regards,
Mary Simpson, AustCham Hong Kong Chief Executive