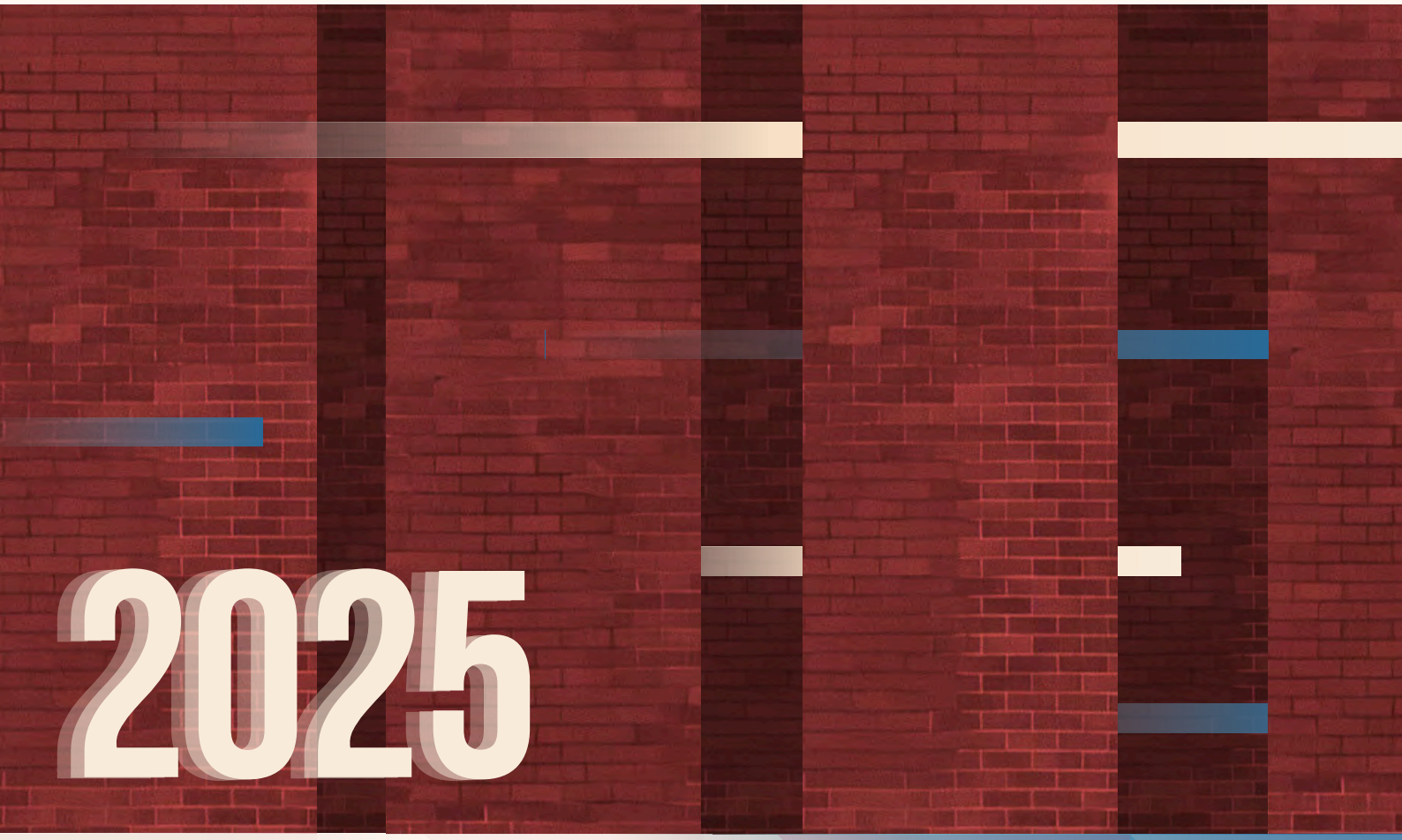
THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY
香港理工大學

Policy Research Centre for Innovation and Technology
科技及創新政策研究中心



2025 POLICY ADDRESS RECOMMENDATIONS

POLICY RESEARCH CENTRE FOR INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY
THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

PREFACE

The year 2025 marks yet another pivotal moment in Hong Kong's ongoing journey of growth and transformation. Building upon the solid foundations established in previous years, we are proud to present our Policy Address Recommendations for 2025. We are sincerely grateful that the Hong Kong SAR Government has given thoughtful consideration to our past recommendations, and we remain optimistic that our insights for this year will likewise be valued and acted upon.

As we formulated these recommendations, we were ever mindful of Hong Kong's unique strengths and enduring advantages. As stated by Mr John Lee, "Hong Kong continues to forge ahead with its unique advantages under the principle of 'one country, two systems', benefitting from the strong support of the motherland and remaining closely connected to the world." This dual advantage empowers us to propose strategies that are not only aligned with national priorities but also position Hong Kong as a dynamic and globally engaged city.

This year, our recommendations are closely aligned with the Government's core commitments: developing the economy and improving people's livelihoods. By leveraging the cutting-edge research and expertise of PolyU's scholars, we aim to provide evidence-based solutions that address both current challenges and future opportunities. Through these efforts, we hope to support the Government in achieving its goals, ensuring that Hong Kong remains resilient, competitive, and well positioned in an ever-evolving global landscape.

We firmly believe that these recommendations will contribute to Hong Kong's sustainable development and long-term prosperity. By concentrating on these critical areas, we aim to support the Government's efforts to foster innovation, enhance connectivity, and improve the quality of life for all residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DEVELOPING THE ECONOMY

1.1 Consolidating Hong Kong's Aerospace Research Resources to support Industry's Development

Establish a Hong Kong Aerospace Coordination Office to Promote Cross-Sector Collaboration and National Integration

Currently, universities, enterprises, and researchers in Hong Kong's aerospace sector often work in isolation. To improve collaboration and national integration, the government is advised to **establish a "Hong Kong Aerospace Coordination Office" as a central platform to coordinate with national aerospace projects.** This office would **streamline resource allocation, promote task sharing, and strengthen the participation of Hong Kong research teams in national-level system engineering.** The office could also liaise with the China National Space Administration and other relevant mainland authorities to **ensure long-term alignment with national strategies.**

Launch a Dedicated Aerospace Research and Education Funding Scheme

The government should **create a "Hong Kong Aerospace Special Fund"** covering **basic research, applied development, and public education.** For example, the fund could support collaborations between universities and start-ups to conduct experiments aboard the national space station and promote downstream technology applications. It should also **offer attractive incentives** such as duty-free equipment and access to shared research platforms for teams involved in national aerospace programmes. A parallel initiative could **support STEM and aerospace education in schools to raise public awareness.** To ensure long-term impact, the fund should be established as a **sustained support mechanism under the Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC)**.

Accelerate the Commercialisation of Aerospace Technologies

A "Fast-Track Transfer Scheme" should be launched to **promote the civilian application of aerospace technologies** developed through national projects, such as thermal insulation materials, structural systems, or attitude control technologies. This can be achieved by

establishing pilot incubators, offering commercialisation grants, and organising technology pitch events. The scheme should also **leverage university Knowledge Transfer (KT) units** to **accelerate the commercialisation of cutting-edge aerospace research**, enabling these technologies to trickle down to the civilian market. Applications could align with emerging sectors such as autonomous driving, low-altitude economy, and smart infrastructure, forming synergies with Hong Kong's broader innovation ecosystem.

Strengthen Aerospace Talent Development and Academic Programmes

To support deeper engagement in national aerospace initiatives, universities should be **encouraged to launch aerospace engineering programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels**. The Government could fund curriculum development and attract international experts as visiting professors. A "Hong Kong Young Aerospace Talents Scheme," modelled after national talent programmes, could **sponsor young researchers for technical training, internships, and mission participation in mainland laboratories or launch sites.** For instance, students from PolyU could be supported to undertake short-term training at the Xichang Satellite Launch Center Scenic Area, gaining valuable hands-on experience and exposure to real-world aerospace projects.

1.2 Accelerating Digital Transformation in Hong Kong's Tourism and Service Industries

Leverage AI and Big Data for Smart Tourism and Service Enhancements

To improve customer experiences and operational efficiency in Hong Kong's tourism and service industries, businesses should adopt AI-powered tools such as chatbots, voice assistants, and service robots to **enhance customer services, streamline booking processes, and provide personalised travel recommendations.** Additionally, big data analytics can be utilised to collect and analyse consumer behaviour, enabling businesses to **optimise marketing strategies, allocate resources effectively, and tailor service offerings**. Developing centralised smart tourism platforms that integrate real-time services such as **itinerary planning, transportation updates, and multilingual guides** will further modernise the visitor experience. Incorporating AR/VR

technologies into these platforms can showcase cultural and heritage sites virtually, attracting international tourists and offering immersive experiences.

Expand Support for Digital Upgrades across Tourism Sector

To address gaps in digital transformation, the Government should expand funding and incentives to help tourism businesses, especially SMEs, to adopt smart tourism technologies. This can be achieved through **tax benefits** and enhancements to the **Digital Transformation Support Pilot Programme**. Furthermore, **improving digital infrastructure**, such as closing gaps in 5G coverage, Wi-Fi availability, and IoT systems, is essential for enabling the widespread adoption of advanced technologies.

Upskill Workforce and Foster Innovation

Upskilling the workforce is another critical area for accelerating digital transformation. The establishment of a **Digital Tourism Academy** through public-private partnerships can help train employees in AI, big data, and other digital tools. Additionally, **promoting industry-research collaborations** can generate innovative solutions tailored to the tourism and hospitality sectors. **Encouraging pilot projects**, such as "Smart Tourism Sandboxes" and funding for start-ups through platforms like Cyberport, will also foster innovation and enable businesses to test and implement new ideas effectively.

Integrate Culture, Sports, and Tourism for Diversified Growth

Finally, **integrating culture, sports, and tourism (CST)** into the broader development of the Greater Bay Area (GBA) is vital for sustained growth. The Government should **consolidate tourism resources** by launching initiatives like "Event Alliance" or "Game Pass" services during major events, offering visitors exclusive discounts, convenient reservation systems, and guided tours. **Cross-border collaboration** within the GBA can also promote CST activities, leveraging new media platforms for interactive marketing campaigns and live events. Additionally, **developing diversified tourism products**, such as family-friendly workshops, sports-themed experiences, and collaborations with cultural IPs, will attract a wider range of visitors and ensure long-term sustainability.

1.3 Advancing the Low-Altitude Economy (LAE)

Build Smart Ground Infrastructure with AI and GISs

To accelerate the implementation of LAE application scenarios, it is critical to enhance **ground infrastructure** such as take-off and landing points, charging stations, and supporting facilities for communication scheduling, navigation, meteorological monitoring, and real-time oversight. The Government should leverage **AI and geographic information systems (GISs)** for precise analysis to identify suitable infrastructure locations. Through the **Common Operational Picture (COP)** established and operated by the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD), real-time monitoring of infrastructure progress can be ensured while improving efficiency and fostering interdepartmental consensus. The Government should also focus on **integrating solar-powered charging infrastructure into urban spaces**, such as streetlights, bus stops, and minibus shelters. These installations can support wireless charging stations for drones and other low-altitude transport vehicles, reducing reliance on traditional energy sources and facilitating sustainable drone logistics.

Develop a Low-Altitude Smart City Cluster in the GBA

To further promote the LAE, the Government should deepen cooperation with Guangdong and Macao by building a **smart city cluster**. **Training for civil servants in the use of AI and GISs** should be strengthened to enable better data analysis and ensure smoother project implementation. Leveraging the "One Country, Two Systems" framework and the development of the GBA would further enhance regional collaboration and position Hong Kong as a leader in the smart LAE.

Invest in Drone Logistics Networks and Infrastructure

The Government should prioritize investment in the development of **drone logistics networks** to drive innovation and efficiency. This includes **constructing take-off and landing stations** to centralise drone operations, reduce safety risks, and improve logistics efficiency and **opening low-altitude flight corridors**, supported by route planning, traffic management systems, and robust regulatory mechanisms, to create a mature and efficient logistics framework. Proper

planning, site selection, and incentivised policy frameworks are critical for success. Such measures would position Hong Kong as a leader in low-altitude logistics in the Asia-Pacific region.

Strengthen Safety Assurance for Low-Altitude Aircraft

Despite advancements in drone technology, safety concerns remain critical. The Government and industry regulators should expedite the development of **technical standards and certification protocols** for safety technologies such as **steerable parafoil systems and onboard diagnostic systems**. These systems can mitigate risks by automatically deploying in emergencies, integrating real-time weather and geographic data to identify low-risk landing zones. Pilot demonstrations and operator training programmes should also be conducted to promote safer and more reliable drone operations.

1.4 Advancing New Energy Vehicles (NEVs) and Green Energy in Hong Kong

Expand NEV Infrastructure and Address Range Anxiety

Hong Kong's current 10,400 public charging stations are inadequate for over 114,000 NEVs, with uneven distribution exacerbating "range anxiety". Hong Kong must **significantly increase the number of public charging stations**, prioritising underserved areas on the basis of population density and income levels. Like Singapore, which established a "Green Mobility" subsidy programme, Hong Kong should introduce tax incentives or subsidies for businesses installing charging stations in high-demand areas. Additionally, **retrofitting older buildings** to enable private NEV charger installation is essential. This can be achieved through technical guidelines, financial support, and simplified approval processes for property managers and owners. To further optimise energy efficiency, **investments in high-precision battery management systems (BMSs) and smart charging systems** should be made. Leveraging AI and big data for dynamic charging resource allocation will also improve charging infrastructure usage.

Promote NEV Adoption through Policy and Education

Promoting NEV adoption requires a combination of financial incentives and public education. In the **short term**, measures such as **subsidies, tax reductions, toll discounts, and green licence**

plates should be implemented to lower barriers to adoption. **Mid-term strategies** could include **discounted parking, zero-emission zones, and reduced registration taxes**, while **long-term investments** in **home chargers, NEV lanes, and improved infrastructure** are necessary to ensure sustained adoption. **Public education campaigns** should focus on highlighting the benefits of NEVs, such as cost-effectiveness, safety, and environmental advantages, tailoring the message to different demographics: for example, younger and lower-income groups prioritise affordability, while older and higher-income individuals emphasise safety and reliability. Additionally, **establishing training programmes for NEV technicians** and engineers is critical to meet the industry's growing demand for skilled professionals. Public-private partnerships can further promote innovation and workforce development.

Strengthen the NEV Ecosystem

To strengthen the NEV ecosystem, the Government should develop policies that **integrate energy providers, vehicle manufacturers, and communication suppliers**, fostering cooperation among stakeholders. Hong Kong's **financial and legal sectors** should play a pivotal role in **assisting Chinese NEV manufacturers** in global exports, leveraging the city's expertise in commercial services. Moreover, creating policies to support the **recycling and reuse of NEV batteries** will promote sustainability and reduce environmental waste, aligning with Hong Kong's low-carbon goals.

Deploy Floating Solar Photovoltaic (FPV) Systems and Energy Storage Technologies

To further diversify Hong Kong's renewable energy portfolio, the Government should promote the development of **floating solar photovoltaic (FPV)** systems on reservoirs and other bodies of water. This initiative would increase renewable energy output while optimising land use. Hong Kong can develop a comprehensive policy framework for scaling up FPV projects. This should include **financial incentives, streamlined approval processes, and collaboration with private enterprises** to expedite implementation. Additionally, energy storage systems should be prioritised to **stabilise the power grid and enhance resilience against fluctuations in renewable energy supply**.

Leverage Hydrogen Energy as a Complementary Green Solution

In addition to EVs, hydrogen energy offers a complementary green solution for sustainable transport. The Government should **establish a comprehensive hydrogen refuelling station network**, prioritising locations such as **transportation hubs, industrial zones, and new development areas**. Private investment should be encouraged through land allocations and tax incentives. **Public awareness campaigns**, including hydrogen-themed exhibitions, test-drive events, and media outreach, should be launched to educate the public on hydrogen fuel cell vehicles (HFCVs) and their benefits. **Demonstration projects using hydrogen-powered buses and government vehicles** would further build market confidence. **Investments in improving the production, storage, and cost efficiency of green hydrogen** are also essential, along with international collaborations to scale up adoption and align with global standards.

Establish Data Sharing and Collaboration Platforms

Creating a **data-sharing platform** for NEV operational data is vital to **support innovation and precise policymaking**. By integrating data from automakers, charging operators, and policymakers, the Government can optimise charging infrastructure planning, improve energy efficiency, and support research on battery and charging advancements. **Establishing a task force** to regularly review the NEV ecosystem, market trends, and user needs would allow for dynamic policy adjustments, ensuring policies remain effective and relevant.

Drive Innovation and Technology Development

Finally, driving innovation and technology development requires **targeted investments in research and development**. Funding for next-generation battery technologies, such as lithium iron phosphate and ternary lithium batteries, will improve energy density, safety, and lifecycle performance. Developing smart systems for energy management and predictive analytics will further enhance NEV operation efficiency. **Hong Kong should also align its NEV and green energy policies with international standards and deepen cooperation with the GBA and global cities**. Jointly executing cross-border hydrogen supply projects, NEV charging networks, and pilot programmes for technology exchange will help Hong Kong establish its position as a global leader in NEV and green energy technologies.

1.5 Promoting Carbon Trading and Carbon Pricing in Hong Kong

Establish a Carbon Trading Market

To encourage carbon reduction in Hong Kong, the Government should promote an **annual carbon reduction target for commercial buildings**. Buildings that fall behind on their reduction goals, as identified by regular energy audits, should be encouraged to offset their emissions through the voluntary procurement of carbon credits. This approach not only incentivises carbon reduction but also creates demand for a robust carbon trading market, fostering the development of a green economy.

Implement Carbon Pricing Policies

The adoption of **carbon pricing mechanisms**, such as carbon taxes and emissions trading systems (ETSs), is essential for reducing emissions and achieving carbon neutrality. Carbon taxes have demonstrated a stronger average impact on emissions reduction compared to ETSs, making them a particularly effective tool for addressing climate change. Implementing these policies in Hong Kong would encourage businesses to adopt greener practices and transition to renewable energy solutions.

Develop Comprehensive Policy Frameworks

To ensure the long-term success and sustainability of carbon pricing policies, the Government should **design clear implementation strategies** and frameworks to enhance policy effectiveness, **support green technologies** and renewable energy development to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, and **demonstrate strong political commitment** by setting definitive carbon neutrality goals and maintaining consistent efforts to achieve them.

1.6 Development of Hong Kong's Engineering Field

Promote Innovation in Construction through Advanced Technologies

To promote innovation in construction, Hong Kong should encourage the adoption of **building integrated photovoltaics (BIPV) by offering gross floor area (GFA) concessions** for new and renovated commercial buildings that incorporate these systems. This measure would incentivise the integration of renewable energy technologies, advancing sustainable engineering practices and improving energy efficiency in the construction sector. Additionally, the establishment of **GBA standards for modular integrated construction (MiC) and mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MiMEP) systems** would streamline innovative construction practices and ensure consistency across the region, further positioning Hong Kong as a leader in modern construction methodologies.

Strengthen Regional and Global Collaboration

Regional and global collaboration should be strengthened to expand Hong Kong's engineering influence. Partnerships between Hong Kong and mainland practitioners can open doors to overseas markets, particularly through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Joint efforts, including **collaborative funding programmes with Guangdong and Macao, as well as training courses, conferences, and exhibitions**, will showcase Hong Kong's engineering expertise and promote its capabilities to international audiences. This collaborative approach will **enhance Hong Kong's global competitiveness in the construction and engineering sectors**.

Support Talent Development in the Engineering Sector

Supporting talent development is crucial for sustaining the growth of Hong Kong's engineering field. To this end, financing schemes should be introduced to assist young professionals in obtaining **mainland professional qualifications**. Covering application fees for these credentials will enable engineers to work across or even beyond the GBA seamlessly, fostering stronger regional integration and creating more career advancement opportunities. This initiative will help build a highly skilled workforce that is well-equipped to meet the demands of the evolving engineering landscape.

2. IMPROVING PEOPLE'S LIVELIHOODS

2.1 Promote the Development of Hong Kong as an International Hub for post-secondary Education.

Accelerate the Development of the Northern Metropolis University Town

Hong Kong has solidified its global leadership in higher education, achieving remarkable progress in the latest international rankings. Continuing the implementation of promotion policy measures, including the expansion of non-local student quotas, not only boosts enrolment rates but is also projected to optimise organisations' financial structure, enhance the attractiveness and competitiveness of Hong Kong as a destination for post-secondary education, and promote Hong Kong's multicultural characteristics. Therefore, **to expand the capacity of local universities to maintain high-level performance, it is crucial to accelerate the development of the Northern Metropolis University Town**. As the development of the University Town attracts both local and non-local institutions, it will further **facilitate knowledge sharing** and create an enabling environment for **educational innovation**, ultimately contributing to achieving the city's ambition of becoming an education hub.

Increase the Quota of Belt and Road (B&R) Scholarships

Hong Kong's higher education institutions continue to strengthen global partnerships and collaborations and promote the "Study in Hong Kong" brand. As existing schemes have shown positive outcomes, we recommend **tripling the quota of B&R scholarships to 450** (as Legislative Council Questions 16: HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund showed 150 scholarships in the 2024/25 academic year) to further attract outstanding talents from B&R countries to study, conduct research, and pursue personal development in Hong Kong or mainland China. This would not only benefit the students but also **enhance international collaboration** and **intercultural exchanges** and help produce a more **skilled workforce** and ultimately benefit Hong Kong's education system.

Increase the Number of Award Places under the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme

In order to attract more local and non-local outstanding students and to nurture the next generation of top-notch talents for Hong Kong, we recommend **increasing the number of award places under the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme to 600**. This will allow Hong Kong to not only ensure a steady influx of high-calibre students but also to include more opportunities in higher education. Raising the quota will further enhance Hong Kong's **research capabilities** and **international standing** by **fostering a vibrant research environment**.

Set Up Government-Guaranteed Loan Schemes to Support International Students

We further recommend strategically aligning the "Study in Hong Kong" scheme with the "Study in China" scheme at the policy level and **supporting international students (especially from the B&R Initiative and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations area) through government-guaranteed loan schemes** for approved applicants from participating countries. These measures would further **ease the financial burden** for the students and **attract international students** to pursue their post-secondary studies in Hong Kong, and ultimately benefit the city by promoting its image as an international educational hub for post-secondary education.

2.2 Enhance the Health of the People

Expand the Service Scope of District Health Centres and Develop Social Care Services

Primary healthcare is a strategic priority in building an effective and resilient healthcare system. A well-established primary healthcare system is essential for improving health outcomes through preventing illness, reducing healthcare costs, and building a resilient healthcare system. We recommend **integrating direct access to physiotherapy and occupational therapy services within all Social Welfare Department subsidized services, community care services, or district elderly community centres,** regarding this as critical to ensure timely consultation, early detection, illness prevention, and timely and effective treatment. We believe that **expanding first-contact services** would enable patients to access relevant professional services more quickly, facilitating informed decisions at a lower cost and reducing long-term healthcare expenses. Such

investments in the development and implementation of integrated health and social care services can assure people's health and wellness, as well as energise the community in the long term.

Strengthen Research and Healthcare Technology to Improve People's Overall Health Level

The Government's support for innovation in **healthcare technology** is important. As technological innovations in the healthcare system are advancing rapidly, we recommend **effectively navigating this era of AI and machine learning to accelerate the quality development and use of these technologies in healthcare**. We are facing a global health challenge that poses significant risks to patient safety and public health, such as antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and multidrug resistance (MDR), a major public health threat jeopardising the efficacy of treatment and the prevention of infection, leading to increased morbidity, mortality, and healthcare costs. Therefore, establishing a **research institute dedicated to studying bacterial AMR**, as well as a **research institute dedicated to the discovery and development of vaccines and therapeutics targeting MDR pathogens,** requires an urgent public policy response as it is a promising direction in healthcare technology implementation for enhancing the overall health level of people in Hong Kong.

Enhance Primary Eye Care Practice in Hong Kong

The rising prevalence of visual health issues, particularly myopia among school-aged children and the aging population, underscores the urgent need to enhance Hong Kong's primary eye care system. It is recommended that the **Government support the development and integration of formalised optometry specialisation pathways, with a focus on paediatric optometry, vision therapy, geriatric eye care, and low vision rehabilitation.** These programmes should be embedded within existing healthcare infrastructure, such as district health centres, and supported by teaching development and professional recognition mechanisms to ensure long-term capacity building in community eye care. Supporting continuous innovation through research and introducing designated programmes are important to address this public health challenge. In particular, **for students from low-income families, it is recommended that primary**

eye care practice be incorporated into student health coverage, supported by free vision screening programmes, centralised procurement, and strengthened ophthalmic service capacity. Concurrently, we believe that **the promotion of defocus incorporated soft contact (DISC) lenses** presents a science-based strategy to control myopia progression among students. Introducing such targeted policies to increase accessibility and public awareness of these lenses, including through school-based education campaigns and financial subsidies such as consumption vouchers, would help to alleviate household burdens and encourage adoption.

2.3 Promote the Use of Sustainable Energy and Create a More Sustainable Environment

<u>Optimse Energy and Waste Renewable Structure, Building a Carbon Neutral City</u>

The transition to renewability is a cornerstone of achieving carbon neutrality and promoting sustainable development in urban areas. It is recommended that the **Government provides financial incentives, such as tax credits, to encourage businesses and households to install renewable energy systems.** Urban space should be optimized through initiatives such as **public green transportation and rooftop solar installations**. Investment in advanced technologies, including **offshore wind farms and energy storage systems**, is essential, along with **the expansion and modernization of the energy grid to ensure efficient energy distribution**. Continuous support is needed to **facilitate scientific research** on advancing innovative technologies for building a **mechanism for achieving carbon neutrality** in the city. Additionally, it is important to **integrate nutritional sustainability into climate policy frameworks**. Also, reducing the landfilling proportion and funding projects for **urban food waste upcycling and circular agriculture** are indispensable. To achieve these aims, it is essential to partner with research institutions, NGOs, and businesses to adopt innovative technologies to scale food waste collection and processing.

<u>Improve Food Safety Performance in Hong Kong</u>

Food-borne illnesses are a significant public health problem caused by consuming food contaminated with pathogens, toxins, or other harmful substances. **Diagnosing and controlling** human food-borne pathogens requires an urgent public health policy response. We recommend

the establishment of a dedicated **research institute focused on interdisciplinary studies that integrate microbiology, agriculture, and food policy**. This institute would prioritise innovative research on advanced detection methods for food-borne pathogens, toxins, and contaminants and identify strategies to promote food safety while also promoting sustainable agricultural practices. To position Hong Kong at the forefront of **sustainable food innovation**, **a dedicated research institute should be established, focusing on safe, sustainable, and innovative food materials. The institute would conduct** interdisciplinary and innovative research on sustainable agriculture practices, nutraceutical food, smart food production, and distribution systems.

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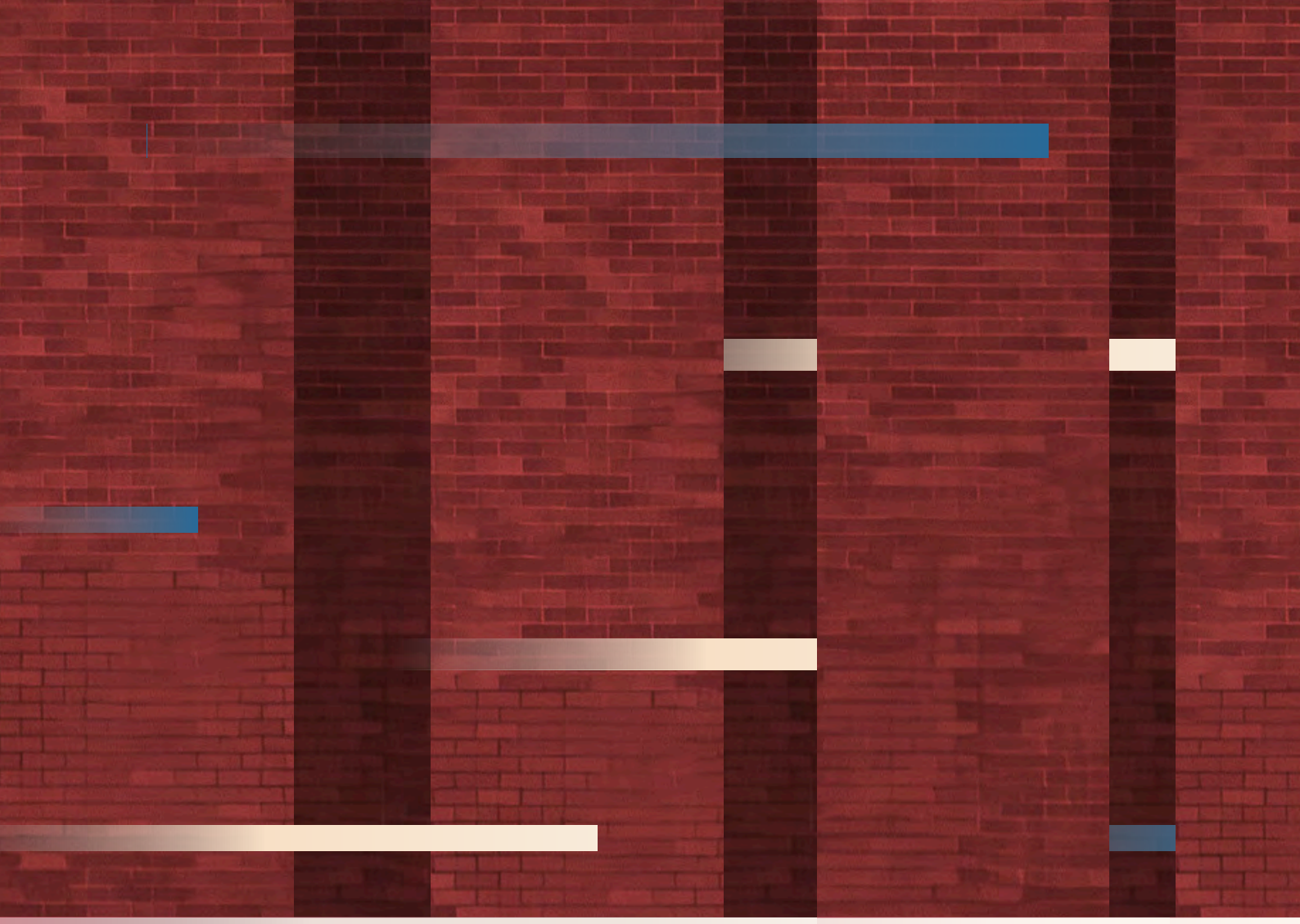

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