

Annual Operation Report of the Samaritan Fund

Members of the Hospital Authority (HA) Board endorsed the report on the overall operation of the Samaritan Fund (the Fund), and the audited financial statements of the Fund for the year ended 31 March 2025.

Established in 1950, the Fund is currently administered by HA. The objective of the Fund is to provide financial assistance to needy patients who fulfill the specified clinical criteria and pass the means test to meet expenses for designated Privately Purchased Medical Items (PPMI) or new technologies required in the course of medical treatment which are not covered by the standard fees and charges in public hospitals and clinics.

Having regard to changes in clinical protocols and scientific evidence, HA regularly reviews the Fund's coverage under the established mechanism. In 2018, HA increased the frequency of prioritisation exercises for including self-financed drugs in the safety net from once to twice a year to provide more timely support to needy patients. Effective since the first quarter of 2025, alongside with the Government's new mechanism for registration of new drugs ("1+" mechanism), HA enhanced the new drug listing and safety net prioritisation processes, with the frequency of prioritisation exercises further increased to four times per year.

In 2024/25, 13 new drugs, two categories of non-drug items and 17 new indications of existing drugs were introduced to the coverage of the Fund. In 2025/26 (up to end October 2025), the Fund further expanded its coverage by introducing nine new drugs, 19 new indications of existing drugs and one expanded indication of a non-drug item. With this extension of coverage, the Fund supports 107 self-financed drugs and ten categories of non-drug items as at 31 October 2025.

Anticipated in December 2025, one non-drug item will be introduced into the Fund's coverage. Additionally, under the enhanced drug listing procedures and quarterly safety net prioritization, further expansion of the Fund's coverage for new drugs is expected in January 2026.

The total number of approved applications for the year 2024/25 is 13,338, approved applications for drugs and non-drug items were 8,555 and 4,783 respectively. The expenditure of the Fund in 2024/25 is \$1,340 million, of which expenditure on drug and non-drug items are \$1,097 million and \$243 million respectively.

The 2025/26 projected expenditure is \$1,815 million (\$1,512 million and \$303 million for drugs and non-drug items respectively). The increase in expenditure is mainly due to the introduction of new drugs and non-drug items to the Fund, accelerated repositioning of items from Community Care Fund Medical Assistance Programmes to SF, as well as the relaxation of means test under the Government's Public Healthcare Fees and Charges Reform, effective 1 January 2026.

The Director of Audit has given an unqualified audit opinion on the 2024/25 financial statements of the Fund. Both income and expenditure of the Fund for 2024/25 amounted to \$1,340 million (2023/24: \$1,015 million). Major sources of income are Government grants, reimbursement from Social Welfare Department and donations. Special thanks to members of the community and the Government who have rendered unreserved support to the Fund. HA will make continuous effort in communicating with patient groups to collate their views on the Fund so as to benefit more needy patients.