

Media Release

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Driverless cars just over the horizon

State and Federal Government action is required to investigate Perth and Australia's future infrastructure needs to prepare for the introduction of driverless cars, RAC warns.

It comes as manufacturers Google and Volvo expect their self-driving production cars will be ready for release in the US and Sweden as early as 2017.

RAC Senior Manager Policy and Research Anne Still said it's not a matter of if this technology will ever be introduced to Perth, but when.

"Automated vehicles have the potential to not only eliminate human error, but also the three biggest killers on our roads – speeding, drink and drug driving and inattention," Ms Still said.

"These cars don't get tired, they don't drink and drive and they don't lose attention behind the wheel, but implementing this technology which is so radically different from our current arrangement will take time, funding and co-ordinated approach from all levels of government.

"These driverless cars could bring about the end of speeding, the need for red light cameras and one day could even result in future generations not requiring their own driver's licence. The designated driver would be the car itself."

However, for automated cars to operate independently of human interaction, a sophisticated communication network and regulatory framework is needed.

"We need to start investigating how we can facilitate these systems, and eliminate the barriers."

Technologies such as automatic emergency braking, radar cruise control and lane-keeping have been around for several years and offer low levels of autonomous functionality.

"Most people consider the idea of a car controlling itself to be unnerving and even unsafe, but most cars on our roads already have a low level of autonomous assistance capability.

"Electronic stability control, for example, automatically applies the brakes to certain wheels of a vehicle when the system senses a loss of traction. This is all done without any intervention by the driver."

RAC is calling for a comprehensive plan to regulate, fund and implement this new technology and role of Government in leading the discussion on how we can facilitate these systems, and eliminate the barriers to automated vehicles, is vital.

"A demonstration or trial would be a useful way to understand the how the advent of autonomous vehicles is likely to affect the way in which our 800,000 members move around our State and it's something RAC is eager to pursue."

As part of its pre-budget submission to the Australian Government, RAC has also asked for \$300 million in funding to support the deployment of Intelligent Transport Systems technology in Western Australia to squeeze more out of our State's existing infrastructure.

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