



Real risk of global embarrassment as Australia falls behind in AV race

Australia's recent drop in ranking in the 2019 Autonomous Vehicles Readiness Index should sound warning bells that a greater focus on getting driverless vehicles onto local roads needs to happen as a priority, says the nation's peak driverless vehicle industry collective.

The Australia and New Zealand International Driverless Vehicle Initiative (ADVI) believes that Australia's fall from a ranking of 14th to 15th is unacceptable, sparking the need for a much closer look at what other countries are doing to achieve higher rankings to get the nation moving back in the right direction.

ADVI Executive Director, Ms Rita Excell, said with the connected and autonomous vehicle industry now globally recognised as the "new economy", sitting on the sidelines waiting for an economic boom to come to Australia is likely to see further slipping behind the rest of the world and important economic and safety opportunities missed.

"In a short space of time Australia has gone from being on the international radar as a leader, to a country that risks being marginalised as it slips further into AV obscurity. Now is the time for leadership and positive action to address these concerns," she said.

"Australia needs to broaden well beyond the current focus on short-term driverless shuttle deployments. In the US, it is now a decade since Google first launched its self-driving car project. In late 2018 we saw Waymo officially start its commercial deployment of a self-driving car service in Phoenix. Smaller start-ups like May Mobility and Drive.ai have moved beyond deployment trials and are now running revenue-generating shuttle services."

Ms Excell said in many ways AV technology is the 21st-century gold rush, with an industry estimated to add \$7 trillion to the global economy and potential to save hundreds of thousands of lives in coming decades.

"If Australia stays asleep at the wheel for much longer we can wave goodbye to securing our fair share of that prize on offer. We have already seen the end of vehicle manufacturing in this country, and the fast-moving AV tech sector can go a long way to filling that gap left behind – but Australia must stop sitting on its hands and waiting for others to first make a move," Ms Excell said.

"Let's have greater focus on our strengths and better leverage our points of difference. The nation is the world's largest net exporter of lithium, we have the 4th largest pension market with AUD\$2.9 trillion under management providing strong investment capital, we have as estimated 7000 world-class vehicle engineers who have lost their jobs and are looking for new opportunities, and we have abundant key resources including sunlight, cobalt, copper, graphite, nickel," she said.

"Those strengths can be harnessed. Now is the time to broaden our focus beyond the US and UK and have a more meaningful look at some of the market-leading developments right on our doorstep – in particular Singapore, which emerged as second in world and first in Asia in its readiness to adopt driverless cars."

A recent report by KPMG International found Singapore as the top-ranking country in terms of policy and consumer acceptance, and second in infrastructure, reflecting its government's efforts to position the country as a centre for autonomous vehicles, and including the 2017 launch of the Centre of Excellence for Testing & Research of Autonomous Vehicles at Nanyang Technological University as a technology test bed.

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About the Australia and New Zealand Driverless Vehicle Initiative (ADVI)

ADVI is the peak body that spans the wide ecosystem of driverless vehicles in Australia and New Zealand. With a membership of more than 120 leading organisations across a wide range of sectors, ADVI offers a unique opportunity for partners to collaborate with Governments, Industry and researchers, to position Australia and New Zealand amongst the world leaders in the development and deployment of driverless technology. ADVI's education, advocacy and demonstration efforts help to inform and raise awareness, encourage community acceptance, and ensure understanding of the economic, environmental and lifestyle benefits of driverless vehicles.

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