



20 May 2024

Dear Commissioners

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Automated Vehicle Safety Reforms Consultation Paper. The introduction of automated vehicles and a framework to regulate them represents a significant step in technology which has the potential to positively impact the lives of many.

By way of background, Council on the Ageing (COTA) NSW is the leading not-for-profit organisation representing the rights and interests of people over 50 in NSW. We're an independent, consumer-based non-government organisation.

Advances in technology can provide significant improvements to lives of vulnerable people. While these cohorts are often small, the potential impact new technologies can have on their lives is the greatest. However, when it comes time to implementation they are often left behind or the potential benefits are seen as aspirational or secondary to the benefits of the wider community.

This time, we encourage the most vulnerable are at the centre of the regulatory framework for automated vehicles. By doing so, we know everyone will benefit.

Older Australians are sometimes in a situation where they are no longer able to safely operate a vehicle and surrender their license. The consequences can be significant. Carrying out everyday tasks such as attending medical appointments, shopping and socialising can become arduous tasks overnight, leaving older people feeling helpless and lost in navigating a new life. Quality of life suffers, including physical and mental health as well as the real prospect of social isolation.

Automated vehicles offer a promising avenue for addressing the mobility and transportation challenges of older people. However, to really benefit it is important that those without a license have appropriate access to automated vehicles. **This means that when it comes to level four and five vehicles it is vital there be no obligation for the presence of licensed person.** As the consultation paper rightly points out 'requiring the presence of a licensed person could significantly impact mobility and accessibility outcomes, as it would limit how unlicensed people could use automated vehicles.'

In our current world, a license and vehicle can provide independence. Automated vehicles can now mean that a vehicle alone can provide the same independence. I urge you to strongly consider the positive impact this can have on many people's lives.

Should you have any questions or if COTA NSW could be of assistance in this review in any other way, please contact me on 0423 501 009 or Gohar.yazdabadi@cotansw.com.au.

Yours sincerely

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