



21 April 2017

Ms Michelle Landry MP
Chair, Standing Committee on Industry, Innovation, Science and Resources
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

House of Representatives standing committee inquiry into the social issues relating to land-based driverless vehicles in Australia

Dear Ms Landry

The Australian Trucking Association welcomes the focus of the parliamentary industry and innovation committee on social issues relating to driverless (autonomous) vehicles, and in particular with relation to passenger and non-passenger safety.

The introduction of increasing levels of automated driving technologies and fully autonomous vehicles will require reform to safety investigations of road accidents involving heavy or autonomous vehicles.

Accidents involving autonomous vehicles will need to be investigated by experts in the technology, safety systems and human factors so safety improvements can be made.

Presently road accidents are investigated by police and/or the coronial system. This existing system is not suitable to the need to investigate the causes of the accident with relevant experts, including where technology and software needs investigation.

In contrast, the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) conducts independent investigation of transport accidents and other safety occurrences in the aviation, marine and rail modes of transport. The ATSB also seeks to improve safety and public confidence in those transport modes by pursuing excellence in safety data and research and fostering safety awareness, in addition to independent investigation of accidents.

The ATSB is an independent statutory agency that is separated from transport regulators, policy makers and service providers. It is not a function of the ATSB to apportion blame or to provide a means for determining liability.

The ATSB's role should be extended to include road accidents involving heavy or autonomous vehicles. The best way to understand the causes of accidents involving autonomous vehicles and generate recommendations to prevent their recurrence would be for those accidents to be investigated through a no-blame accident investigation process, including the ability to access data from the vehicles involved.

Recommendation

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau should be extended to provide independent, no-blame, safety investigations for road accidents involving heavy or autonomous vehicles.

By also extending ATSB safety investigations to road accidents involving heavy vehicles, the reform can be implemented and improve road safety in the short term, and demonstrate to the community in advance of the widespread introduction of autonomous vehicles the improved safety investigation framework for accidents involving autonomous vehicles.

The ATA contact for this letter is Sam Marks on 6253 6900 and samuel.marks@truck.net.au

Yours sincerely



Ben Maguire
Chief Executive Officer