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Your Ref:

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Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Industry, Innovation, Science and Resources  
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Canberra ACT 2600

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Dear Committee Secretary

## **ONRSR RESPONSE - INQUIRY INTO DRIVERLESS VEHICLES**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the inquiry into the social implications of driverless vehicles.

The Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator (ONRSR) is responsible for administering the Rail Safety National Law (RSNL). The principle objective of ONRSR is to facilitate safe railway operations across Australia. ONRSR regulates the rail industry in accordance with the RSNL, supporting regulations, policies and guidelines and promotes safety as a fundamental objective in the delivery of railway operations.

The RSNL's focus on safety is premised around the safety of people, including passengers, rail safety workers and the general public. As such, the RSNL requires all rail transport operators to ensure the safety of their operations by eliminating or minimising risks so far as is reasonably practicable.

Autonomous rail technology has the potential to provide a range of improvements, including safety benefits. Automated trains have been in operation around the world for a number of years and are currently being introduced in Australia in the Pilbara region of Western Australia, and in Sydney as part of its new Metro system. Australia's existing rail safety regulatory framework accommodates the emergence of this technology.

Rail transport operators must be accredited to operate by ONRSR. As part of this process, extensive risk assessment and mitigation of risks so far as is reasonably practicable must be undertaken. ONRSR works closely with rail transport operators from the concept development stage through to full operation. To be accredited by ONRSR, rail transport operators must be able to demonstrate competence and capacity in managing risks to safety. In satisfying the duty to ensure safety so far as is reasonably practicable, operators are required to have a safety management system in place and to consider relevant standards, including international standards and industry best practice.

This means that while each proposed railway operation presents different risks which must be assessed and managed (for example, potential risks associated with movement of passengers on and off trains at platforms, and trespassers in the rail corridor), the RSNL establishes clear requirements and obligations for the management of such risks.

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Please contact Julie Bullas on [REDACTED] if you wish to discuss these comments further.

Yours sincerely



Sue McCarrey  
Chief Executive