

AUSTRALIAN STATES URGED TO JOIN FORCES FOR DRIVERLESS CARS TRIALS, AS OTHER COUNTRIES STEAM AHEAD

18 October 2018 | Australia, Asia Pacific
News

Global law firm Herbert Smith Freehills is calling on Australian eastern seaboard states to join forces to ensure the country is prepared for the coming rise of driverless cars – or Connected Autonomous Vehicles (CAVs).

The call comes as the firm releases a report that explores the issues Australia must consider to be prepared for the arrival of CAVs.

Preparing Australia: Connected and Autonomous Vehicles focuses on the opportunities and challenges Australia must consider in three key areas: government, smart cities, and balancing risk and opportunity.

The firm hosted a conference “Driving forward with connected and autonomous vehicles” in Sydney earlier in 2018 – the final event in a global series hosted in New York, London and across Asia. The report explores the views of panellists at the conference as well as experts within the Herbert Smith Freehills CAV team on what Australia needs to consider in order to be ready for CAVs and smart cities.

Herbert Smith Freehills’ Partner and CAV topic lead [Nicholas Carney](#) said that while Australia is behind most developed economies in terms of CAV preparedness, with increased focus and a national framework, Australia could quickly make up ground.

“The general industry view is that Australia is lagging – we’re certainly not at the forefront of CAV development globally,” he said.

“But it doesn’t need to be that way. If the eastern seaboard states came together to run a major trial, that could be a game-changer for Australia.”

“That would require multiple jurisdictions to very quickly commit to uniform and harmonious legislative regimes, and to commit to the sharing of data.”

“Australian Transport Ministers have committed to ensuring Australia is prepared for commercially available CAVs by 2020, and while we commend the work being done by transport ministers and the National Transport Commission (NTC) to harmonise laws in the next two years, that initiative will simply remove barriers to CAVs. It is necessary but not sufficient to make us CAV ready,” Mr Carney said.

Herbert Smith Freehills has therefore called on government and businesses groups to work to attract major technology and auto-manufacturing players from overseas.

“Given the major technology companies and auto-manufacturers are not headquartered in Australia, we need to make it worth their while to conduct trials and develop their technology here. We need the right incentives.”

In Australia there is a particular opportunity to take advantage of automated-trucking technology, but the harmonisation of state laws would be essential for that to occur.

“Given the long distances between major Australian population centres and our reliance on road freight, and particularly given the number of fatalities that industry experiences, we should be conducting automated, or semi-automated truck trials,” Mr Carney said.

Mr Carney said that Australian businesses and the community at large would reap the benefits of CAVS which include improved safety outcomes, more efficient use of infrastructure and ultimately cheaper transportation.

CAVs will transform our cities and reshape several major sectors in our economy – the countries which are the first to embrace this exciting new technology will reap the most benefits,” Mr Carney said.