



Drive for smart, driverless cars

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iQ Editor

A SUPER-intelligent driverless car ideal for travelling from home to the train or busway are being created by a partnership between Griffith University and Paris-based computer scientists.

What sounds like science fiction has already been trialled in the Netherlands and the French Riviera resort town of Antibes with positive results.

Driving the project are Griffith University's Professor Ljubo Vlacic, program leader of the Institute for Integrated and Intelligent Systems and Dr Michel Parent of the French National Institute for Research in Computer Science and Control (INRIA).

Dr Parent, whose official title is Directeur de Programmes IMARA (Informatique Mathematiques et Automatique

pour la Route Automatis) was in Brisbane last week.

The European Economic Union, he said, had recently invested €4 million (\$A6.4 million) in the project which would fund about 50 per cent of the work and allow a longer collaboration between himself and Professor Vlacic.

The Australian Academy of Science has also been providing financial assistance to help with the joint research.

Far from adding to the chaos or the number of accidents on the roads, Professor Vlacic said driverless cars, which would be seen on the roads in less than 20 years, would reduce oil-dependability, improve access to public transport systems, increase mobility and also enhance safety because it would remove the human error and inattention that caused 95 per cent of accidents and killed one million drivers, passengers and ped-

estrians around the world every year.

Such "smart" cars will be able to transport the elderly, the disabled, the young and others unable to drive themselves.

"There are many advantages with driverless cars," he said. "They will be safer cars."

A car that knows when to overtake, how to cross an intersection, how to avoid obstacles, when to stop for a pedestrian and communicate with other cars to know when to move faster in total safety?

"Yes."

How? "Through its own computer intelligence."

Dr Parent said several metro trains on the Paris underground had been running for 20 years without accidents, giving the system greater capacity and efficiency as shortage of drivers was not a problem.



SMART men and their smart cars . . . Professor Ljubo Vlacic, left, of Griffith University, and Dr Michel Parent of the French National Institute for Research in Computer Science.

Picture: Grant Parker