

Plan for driverless vehicles unveiled

Brisbane
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Scientists plan to put the brakes on road rage by developing driverless cars.

A new project developed by scientists at Queensland's Griffith University aims to create a city where automatic vehicles replace private cars.

The driverless vehicles would be able to take people wherever they want to go without risking crashes or road rage.

Onboard computers would allow the vehicles to "talk" to each other as they moved around the streets.

The system was developed by microelectronic engineering researchers from the university's Intelligent Control Systems Laboratory and has been tested in golf-buggy sized vehicles at a research centre in France.

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Project leader, associate professor Ljubo Vlacic said it was the first time in the world a completely automated system in which the vehicles could interact with one another had been demonstrated.

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He said the research would lead to a revolution in transport with automatic driving systems entirely replacing human drivers.

"The technology we have developed will enable a plethora of autonomous vehicles to coexist on the roads and drive in cooperation with each other and even simultaneously with road vehicles driven by humans," Professor Vlacic said.

He said initially the system would complement existing public transport systems by taking people to or from their homes and railway and bus stations or to move around the city centre.

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But further development would allow it to be fitted to normal vehicles which could be driven to city centres by human drivers before switching to automated control.


Professor Vlacic admitted that for the system to succeed Australia would need a radical rethink of its car culture.

"There is room for implementation of the project providing society is prepared and dedicated to do that," he said.

He said the system could at first be used in dedicated lanes or separate areas of cities to allow people to accept that it worked and realise the benefits.

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