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France rejects Autonomous Vehicle Driving Technology

Some in Australia, are questioning that our government is moving too slowly with regard to developing vehicle regulations and new road rules, to allow autonomous vehicle driving technology to be deployed on Australian roads. However, with recent news out of France, perhaps the cautious approach being taken by Australian law makers is the most prudent path to take. The Truck Industry Council (TIC) advocates for a cautious approach to the deployment of autonomous vehicle technology, particularly for larger heavy vehicles. Now it seems, TIC and the Australian government's restraint is being echoed by a leading European nation.

The French government has publicly opposed the use of Tesla's Full Self-Driving (FSD) software on European roads in its current form, citing unresolved safety concerns over speeding and driver attention. France's transport Minister, Philippe Tabarot, said the system offers technological advances but that its safety trade-offs are not yet sufficient to justify wholesale authorised use on public roads. Minister Tabarot added that other European countries shared France's concerns regarding the systems software, though he did not name them. France is the first European Union government to openly reject a Dutch-led initiative seeking European bloc-wide approval of FSD. Such autonomous vehicle driving technology can accelerate, brake and steer a vehicle, without any driver inputs, but does require the driver to remain ready to intervene. The Netherland's road authority provisionally approved the technology for use on Dutch roads in April 2026, prompting Belgium, Denmark, Estonia and Lithuania to follow, ahead of a possible European Union vote in the Northern hemisphere's Autumn (our Spring). Minister Tabarot has indicated that France is not rejecting the autonomous driving technology permanently, but wants stronger safety assurances before supporting its broader European deployment. Detailing that France will continue technical discussions with Dutch authorities and other member states.

Earlier this year, Reuters reported that a Swedish transport authority recommended a vote against the Europe-wide rollout of Tesla's Full Self-Driving software unless the software is revised to disable the vehicle's ability to exceed legal country speed limits, a regulatory letter shows. A letter dated 30 April 2026, obtained through a freedom of information request, detailed that the Swedish Transport Administration (TRV) said the Full Self-Driving feature should not be approved for European Union roads unless its ability to ignore speed limits is removed. An Estonian transport official said speeding remained a concern but that the

country approved FSD because the driver retains ultimate responsibility of the vehicle's control, under laws. This sentiment was echoed by a spokesperson for Denmark's road authority, detailing that drivers have full responsibility when using FSD, including adhering to speed limits.

With a European vote fast approaching, whereby European Union approval requires a qualified majority of 15, of the bloc's 27, member states, representing at least 65% of the Union's population, Estonia, along with many other countries, has yet to decide how it will vote. Finland and Greece have openly stated that they are undecided on approval of the FSD system. If rejected, the Dutch provisional approval would lapse after six months, and national approvals based on it would also be withdrawn, according to the Danish road authority.

I am sure that Australian governments will be watching the European Union vote with interest. Whilst this is only one vehicle manufacturer's autonomous driving system, the parameters, limits and functionality, programmed into the FSD software are what is being considered by Europe. This will potentially set a base line of what European Union countries consider acceptably safe and what is not, for autonomous vehicle driving technology.

There is little doubt that once fully developed, autonomous vehicle driving technology will lead to safer road safety outcomes. However, there is always the risk that early adoption of these autonomous self-driving systems, without sufficient regulatory rigor, may lead to unfavourable safety consequences in the short term. France's cautious approach and being taken by Australian government's, Federal, State and Territory should be supported, rather than questioned.

Tony McMullan
CEO, Truck Industry Council