TWU principles on Humanless taxis

1 The exclusion of heavy vehicles

Road transport is Australia's deadliest industry.

Automated driving systems entering the broader transport industry, especially where heavy vehicles share public roads, poses significantly greater **risk to community safety, worker displacement, and supply chain resilience.**

Any new law or change to existing legislation that permits the entrance of automated vehicle technology must be contained to light passenger vehicles at this time.

2 Protections before, not after

There are already **significant concerns** for workers, the public and first responders in cities where robotaxis have been deployed at the whim of tech companies.

A "let-it-rip" approach would risk:

- Up to **85,600 jobs**
- **$220 million** in Australian wages.

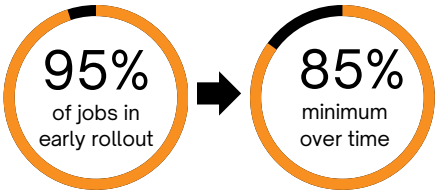
The unchecked entry of the gig economy has seen **25 deaths** and workers denied basic rights.

We need protections now - before the damage is done.

3 Humans must be at the centre

We must see a **human-led** approach to automated vehicles—not humanless-only entrants taking jobs and wages from workers and the community.

A requirement of operator certification to introduce or deploy automated vehicles must be an obligation to ensure human drivers receive:



Profits from marginal deployments must be reinvested into wages and job transition opportunities.

TWU
Carrying Australia

Background

YouGov polling

TWU-commissioned polling of 1500 Australian voters showed:

Public concern

71% oppose fully automated taxis and trucks on Australian roads

73% would feel unsafe sharing the roads with driverless trucks/taxis

Strong support for regulation

- **60%** say the Federal Government should intervene to stop corporations deploying driverless vehicles
- **67%** say the Federal Government should lead the world on regulation to ban/impose strict paramters around driverless vehicles
- 3 in 4 say the Federal Government should act to protect transport workers losing their jobs to driverless vehicles
- **Almost two-thirds** say they would feel more comfortable with automated trucks and taxis if a driver was available to take control of the vehicle
- 4 in 10 would be less likely to vote for a government that didn't intervene when it came to driverless vehicles

John Curtin research

John Curtin Research Centre analysis on potential impact to rideshare drivers from robotaxi deployment:

Up to **85,600 job losses**

$220 million in wages at risk during early-stage rollout

Safety incidents

SAN FRANCISCO

- During a (Dec 2025) power outage, Waymo reported almost 1,600 vehicle stoppages, blocking major roads and intersections
- 911 dispatchers reportedly called Waymo 31 times, with one call kept on hold for 53 minutes
- During July 4 celebrations, autonomous vehicles became immobilised, blocked key streets, trapped Muni shuttles and required tow trucks that could not reach the scene

AUSTIN

- Waymo investigated for illegal and dangerous behaviour around school buses— more than 20 instances in Austin
- Fire and police officials made dozens of complaints on robotaxi incidents, including vehicles failing to stop for uniformed police under lights and sirens
- A Waymo robotaxi blocked an ambulance responding to a mass shooting

WUHAN

- 100+ robotaxis stalled, some passengers stuck for hours in busy multi-lane roads

PHOENIX

- Passengers trapped or unable to get timely human assistance, including a Phoenix airport trip where support staff were unable to take control

Recommendations for automated vehicle deployment

transport workers' union

1. Workforce impact assessment and public interest test before law changes

Workforce impact assessment

Changes to our laws should be paused until a comprehensive workforce impact assessment has examined likely effects on:

- Driver employment
- Hours
- Earnings
- Geographic coverage
- Labour-market adjustment

Public interest test

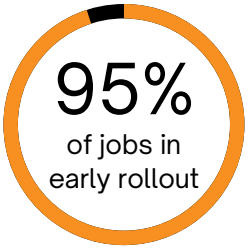
This technology should also be subject to a public interest test, including demonstrated:

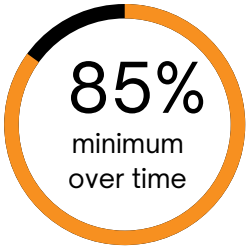
- community benefit
- Transparency about risks
- Evidence that deployment has social licence.

If the risks outweigh the benefits, human-less vehicles should not be imported or deployed in Australia at all. These assessments must occur before, not after, deployment begins.

2. Human driver guarantee: a condition of market entry

Every authorised operator must maintain a large human workforce and allocate the vast majority of work to them. The obligation must be a condition of market entry for any operator wishing to introduce or deploy automated vehicles, with reporting obligations to ensure compliance. All operators must ensure human drivers receive:





3. Pay and conditions underpinned by enforceable minimum standards set by the Fair Work Commission.

Profits reinvested

Workforce and community to benefit from profit gains.

Minimum standards

Orders made by the FWC must protect earnings, including cost recovery, and other rights and conditions.

Workers protected

Remaining passenger transport drivers and workers in new roles must have minimum rights and protections. This avoids operators gaming the system by allocating trips to drivers while worsening pay and conditions.

4. Redeployment costs funded by operators introducing automated vehicles

Operators should offer redeployment opportunities to the existing workforce first, and fund the cost of transition.

5. Mandate workforce and operational data

Operators should be required to report monthly data on:

- Human and human-less trips
- Hours
- Earnings
- Utilisation
- Time of day
- Geographic coverage

As well as:

- Safety incidents
- Service disruptions
- Emergency-service interference
- Vehicle immobilisations

Regulators should have audit powers to test reported figures against platform records, with escalating penalties for non-compliance.

6. Preserve peak, geographic and accessibility capacity

Authorisation conditions should require operators to maintain sufficient human-driver capacity for:

- Evening and weekend peaks
- Outer-metropolitan and underserved areas
- Passengers with accessibility needs
- Circumstances in which human judgement remains necessary

This would prevent AV operators from concentrating services in the easiest and most profitable markets while leaving those in greatest need underserved.

7. Worker consultation a condition of any trial, pilot, authorisation or commercial expansion.

Workers are experts in the field, and should contribute to the design, introduction and potential expansion of technology.

8. Freight, heavy vehicles and other transport sectors must be excluded.

The proposition of automated driving systems in freight, heavy vehicle transport and broader transport supply chains poses significantly greater risk to public safety, worker displacement, and supply chain resilience.

Any law that permits the entrance of automated vehicle technology must expressly exclude other transport sectors and heavy vehicles.

Before the introduction of this technology is considered for those sectors, independent and rigorous risk assessments on safety, displacement, and industry sustainability must be completed and actioned, and community benefit verified.

9. Mandatory cybersecurity, privacy, surveillance and data protections

There must be an independent risk assessment that confirms enforceable Australian standards are met and can protect against:

- Hacking
- Remote interference
- Worker and passenger surveillance
- Location tracking
- Offshore data transfer
- Unsafe software updates
- Risks to road safety, privacy, national security and transport-system resilience

10. Clear accountability on companies benefiting from automated vehicle technology.

Any company benefiting from the rollout of automated vehicle technology must be accountable for its safe, fair and sustainable introduction and deployment. This includes wealthy clients at the top of supply chains and goes beyond liability in an accident.

Clear recommendations to ensure technology is deployed in public interest

If automated vehicles are introduced on Australian roads, they must be introduced on terms set by the community, not private technology firms. A framework that permits displacement first and asks questions later would repeat the failures of the gig economy on a larger, more dangerous and more permanent scale.

Automated vehicle deployment should proceed only under a national, worker-centred framework requiring workforce impact assessment, worker and union consultation, enforceable human-work obligations, earnings protections, transparent reporting and demonstrated public benefit.

Without those conditions, automated vehicles risk becoming another example of innovation measured by private profit but paid for by workers, passengers and communities.

Australia should choose a different path: technology that serves people, rather than people being pushed aside to serve a technology-driven business model.