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**Catalyst, *Sit Back, Relax: The Dawn of the Driverless Car*
Airing: Tuesday 26 September, 8.30pm on ABC & ABC iview**



Next week on **Catalyst** (screening Tuesday 26 September, 8.30pm on ABC & ABC iview) ***Sit Back, Relax: The Dawn of the Driverless Car***, looks at the fast-emerging world of self-driving vehicles on our roads. This dream of the driverless car has always felt like it belonged in the realm of science fiction. But in recent years semi-autonomous cars has become a commercial reality. These cars can park themselves – without the driver even being in the car – as well as keep the car within the well-marked lines of a modern freeway, steer and brake to avoid unseen obstacles in a vehicles path. This technology is discussed and explained by some of the industry leaders in automation and artificial intelligence from Silicon Valley and various universities.

However, driverless cars raise many questions as to their social utility, with some of Australia's leading technology and motoring journalists reflecting on the good and bad of a world where people no longer guide (or even steer) the vehicles that carry them from A to B. Will city streets become over loaded with autonomous cars performing minor tasks for their owners? Or will a future of dependable, electrically operated autonomous cars mean an end to traffic accidents and pollution?

Sit Back, Relax: The Dawn of the Driverless Car, reviews the somewhat comical past of driverless technology, it takes a trip back in time to the clunky autonomous golf carts NASA developed in the 1970's. Then jumps forward to the DARPA Challenge of the early 2000's that saw an autonomous four-wheel-drive vehicle cross part of the Mojave Desert. The successful leader of the DARPA winning team, Sebastian Thrun, now a leading CEO in the technology world, evangelises on the benefits and value of driverless vehicles. Running counter to the support from the technological community of Silicon Valley is Sydney based Ben Erdahl. Ben is a traditional car customiser and Hot Rod builder. Ben voices his beliefs that any new technology will have its faults, and at present, driverless cars still seem to have many flaws. Ben also offers his own perspective on the lack of support for autonomous driving amongst the car enthusiasts who are his customers.

Taking a trip into suburbia, the program also looks at the similarities in what a learner driver must understand and perceive as they master the art of driving safely in all conditions. This ability to learn awareness and perception - and thus safety - is mirrored in the 'deep learning' that the computers onboard an autonomous vehicle must also learn the various levels of 'driverless' capability by autonomous vehicles.

So, on Tuesday, 26 September, 8.30pm on ABC & iview, sit back and relax as **Catalyst** takes you on the fascinating journey into the world of driverless cars.

For further information and to organise interviews - contact:

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