Using Electric Vehicles (EV) after Stroke

Across Australia, there are currently over 445,000 people who are living with the effects of a Stroke. Experiencing a Stroke is a life changing event, and you'll likely have to adapt to new ways of doing many different things. Particularly if you're eager to maintain your independence, one area you may have to address is your car and the way you drive. Getting back on the road can be a daunting prospect, and you'll want to ensure you've taken every possible precaution to make sure that you can continue to get around safely.

By now you'll be familiar with the eco benefits that come with driving an electric vehicle (EV). They have gained popularity in recent years as a green vehicle alternative, as the world tries to reduce the effect of climate change. But did you know that they can also offer plenty of additional benefits for drivers who have experienced a Stroke? In this article, the potential impacts that Stroke can have on your driving ability and the potential advantages that an EV could offer you are discussed.

How can a Stroke affect driving ability?

As with any medical issue, there is likely to be varying levels of severity between Stroke survivors, meaning people will be affected in different ways. However, there are a few typical effects of Strokes that can impact a person's ability to get back behind the wheel. One of the most prevalent is pain and weakness in arms and/or legs, which can make driving a standard car more uncomfortable.

Eyesight is also often affected by a Stroke, and people may experience double or blurred vision. They might also find that their cognitive abilities have been negatively impacted, which can affect many different aspects of their ability to drive safely. These include making quick decisions, navigation and concentration.

As such, it's crucial that you take the time to understand how the effects of a Stroke may influence your driving, allowing you to make informed decisions around how to best keep yourself and other road users safe.

Benefits of an EV post Stroke

There are many different features that come as standard in the majority of electric vehicles that can each offer their own advantages to drivers who have experienced a Stroke. Here are some of the assistive features that can create a smoother, more comfortable driving experience:

- **Automatic gears** - Particularly for drivers who commonly experience pain in their arm(s), having automatic gears as standard will make it easier to get behind the wheel, particularly over prolonged journeys. Having one less thing to worry about (changing gears) can give drivers more freedom to concentrate on other aspects of driving, such as speed control or their position on the road.

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- **Spacious interior** - With internal combustion engines being replaced by electric motors, EVs are typically far more spacious, allowing for a more comfortable ride for both the driver and their passengers. A Stroke can affect mobility, making it difficult to get in and out of a car. As such, the additional space inside an EV could help to make this process easier, and improve comfort throughout your journey.

- **Compatible with assistive modifications** - After doing some research, you may find that the safest way to get back behind the wheel is by making use of some assistive technologies. There are many different modifications that can be made to EVs to support drivers, such as hand controls and steering aids. Check out all of the available options and you'll be sure to have the reassurance that you're fully equipped to drive safely once again.

Accessible adaptions for EVs

EVs are capable of being fitted with a number of adaptions to make them more accessible to drivers. Here are some of the best options that can be added to your vehicle:

- **Hand controls** - Introducing something like a push or pull device to help with accelerating and braking can be useful for drivers who aren't able to freely use the lower half of their body.

- **Pedal modifications** - If you still want to use pedals as they are traditionally intended, you can extend them to reach up to your feet. This makes driving more comfortable and simple for those who cannot reach them at the standard distance.

- **Electronic accelerators** - For those who aren't able to freely use pedals when driving, but also lack the strength to use a push and pull lever, there are a series of electronic accelerators available. Each of these will come with a hand-operated brake device. These can be placed throughout different areas of your vehicle:
  - Trigger accelerator – pull this forward to accelerate and push away to brake.
  - Over ring accelerator – placed on the steering wheel, pushing down to accelerate.
  - Under ring accelerator – put behind the wheel, with speed controlled by you pulling it towards the wheel.
  - Ghost ring accelerator – fitted behind the wheel, with a driver controlling speed by moving it from side-to-side.

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