

MEDIA RELEASE

9 April, 2010

The second of Australia's largest Tunnel Boring Machines arrives in Brisbane for Airport Link

It's all systems go for the Airport Link Project with the arrival of its second Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) to Brisbane this week, completing another step in the journey for the two largest TBMs to ever operate in Australia.

The 3,600 tonne TBM, delivered to Australia in three container shipments, arrived at the Port of Brisbane earlier this week and is now being unloaded for delivery to the Project's construction site at Kalinga Park in Toombul.

The project's other TBM, which arrived in Brisbane last November, is at the Kalinga Park site being pre-assembled prior to the machine being launched for tunnelling operations in late June 2010.

Project Director Gordon Ralph said the Tunnel Boring Machines, valued at \$45 Million each, were 'Earth Pressure Balance' models specially designed for Airport Link tunnelling.

"The TBMs will encounter soft ground conditions with a mix of rock, sand and gravel when they first commence tunnelling from Kalinga Park in Clayfield, and these are the ground conditions in which the machines will be most effective," said Mr Ralph.

"The TBMs are highly versatile – they are extremely safe to use when excavating softer ground but also have the ability to cut through rock that is 6-8 times harder than concrete", he said.

The Tunnel Boring Machines will be launched from a giant custom-built TBM launch box at the Kalinga Park worksite, scheduled for completion later this month.

"The launch box measures 106 metres long and 20 metres deep, and will house the machines as they are lowered into the ground for assembly from early May 2010," said Mr Ralph.

"The TBMs are 195 metres in length when fully assembled, longer than Suncorp Stadium's playing field, so they will be lowered into the ground in parts by large gantry cranes positioned over the launch box," he said.

Airport Link comprises twin 5.1 kilometre road tunnels, and the two Tunnel Boring Machines will be used to excavate the section of tunnel between Clayfield and Lutwyche.

Detailed assembly of the TBMs within the launch box will take approximately two months for each machine, and excavation of the westbound tunnel will commence first in late June 2010. Excavation of the eastbound tunnel will commence one month later.

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The Airport Link project is being constructed together with the Northern Busway (Windsor to Kedron), requiring a total of 15 kilometres of tunnelling for road and busway tunnels and their connecting ramps.

One quarter of tunnelling has been completed to date with four kilometres of the total 15 now excavated from major tunnelling sites established at Bowen Hills, Windsor and Kedron.

The tunnels are being excavated using a combination of techniques involving Tunnel Boring Machines, roadheader machines and cut and cover construction.

On completion in 2012, constructor Thiess John Holland will reinstate the work site at Toombul and return Kalinga Park to the local community.

As part of the project, there will be upgrades to Kalinga Park with new pathway connections, BBQ facilities and a children's playground, along with enhancements to the Schulz Canal waterway.

When it opens in 2012, Airport Link will be the first major motorway connecting Brisbane city with the airport and northern suburbs, avoiding up to 18 sets of traffic lights.

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