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Brisbane invited to name Australia's largest Tunnel Boring Machines

Premier Anna Bligh joined the Airport Link Project team today to witness the lowering of Australia's largest Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) cutterhead in to the ground at Kalinga Park.

The 12.48m cutterhead was lowered underground by a gantry crane into the six-storey tunnel launch box in preparation for the scheduled launch of the first TBM in July.

Ms Bligh said the lowering of the 220 tonne cutterhead represented a significant step towards the start of TBM tunnelling for Airport Link.

"The two \$45 million Tunnel Boring Machines arrived in pieces from Germany in November and April. Since then the machines have been progressively assembled by a dedicated crew of approximately 80 people," Ms Bligh said.

"Soon the Tunnel Boring Machines will begin their journey from a giant launch box which measures 105m long x 35m wide x 6 storeys deep. A 300-strong team worked around the clock for 18 months to construct the box.

"The 250 separate components of the Tunnel Boring Machines will be lowered in to the launch box by two 150 tonne cranes and three 40 tonne cranes.

"In late July, the first Tunnel Boring Machine is expected to begin its 12-month journey from Toombul to Lutwyche, fitting out the tunnel with a concrete lining as it moves forward at about 85m per week."

Ms Bligh said with assembly of the TBMs now well underway, Brisbane residents could help name the two machines which will carve out the Airport Link mainline tunnel.

"We are inviting Brisbane residents to put their thinking caps on and help the project team come up with names for these massive machines," she said.

"In keeping with tradition, we ask that people nominate a female name for the machines when sending us their entries.

"Detailed assembly of the two 3,600 tonne Tunnel Boring Machines takes approximately three months each, with the launch of tunnelling scheduled for July 2010.

"The lucky winners of the naming competition will receive an invitation to join site workers when the first Tunnel Boring Machine starts excavation."

To register for the TBM naming competition, visit the project website at www.brisconnections.com.au and submit your suggestion online. Alternatively, you can visit the Airport Link Visitor Information Centre at Centro Lutwyche shopping centre on Lutwyche Road. Winners will be announced in July.

Minister for Infrastructure and Planning Stirling Hinchliffe said smaller roadheader machines had already completed more than 4km of tunnels between Bowen Hills and Wooloowin. He said the roadheaders would work with TBMs to complete a total of 15km of tunnel.

"There are now 17 roadheader tunnelling machines, weighing in at around 135 tonnes each, hard at work under Brisbane - the largest number of roadheaders ever to work on an Australian project," Mr Hinchliffe said.



“The first roadheader started tunnelling at Truro Street in March 2009 and there are now six roadheaders at Bowen Hills, seven in Lutwyche/Windsor, three at Kedron and one on site at Woolloowin.

“The two largest Tunnel Boring Machines ever to operate in Australia are scheduled to join the roadheaders in coming months. The Tunnel Boring Machines are highly effective with the ability to cut through rock six to eight times harder than concrete.

“Each Tunnel Boring Machine requires up to 22 workers to operate the machine and in total there are currently close to 3000 people working on the combined Airport Link projects which will generate a total of close to 10,000 jobs.”

CEO of BrisConnections Dr Ray Wilson congratulated the Toombul team for their hard work in completing construction of the launch box and preparing the site for the launch of the TBMs.

“Once assembled in the launch box, the Tunnel Boring Machines will commence their journey from Kalinga Park and travel east towards Lutwyche, excavating a 2.5km section of the twin 5.1km mainline tunnels for Airport Link,” Mr Wilson said.

“The first machine to commence excavation will carve out the eastbound mainline tunnel, with the second machine commencing excavation one month later in the westbound tunnel.”

Thiess John Holland Project Director Gordon Ralph said a custom-built covered conveyor system would operate 24/7 to transport the TBM spoil from Kalinga Park directly to the project’s spoil handling facility on Nudgee Road.

“A total of 1.1 million tonnes of spoil is expected to be generated by the Tunnel Boring Machines,” Mr Ralph said.

“This 2km conveyor system will transport up to 2,600 tonnes of spoil per hour, ultimately removing 80,000 truck movements from local roads on Brisbane’s Northside.”

The Airport Link project is being constructed together with the Northern Busway (Windsor to Kedron), and the Airport Roundabout Upgrade Project. The combined Airport Link projects are the biggest infrastructure construction underway in Australia.

When it opens in mid 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. It will improve travel times in a city currently experiencing the worst peak hour traffic in the country.

The project will also deliver one million new plants and trees, 13km of new or improved cycle and pathways and more than 3ha of new parkland.

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