

MEDIA RELEASE

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Airport Link TBMs laid to rest after epic journeys

Today, deep underground at Lutwyche, the Airport Link project's Tunnel Boring Machines (TBMs) 'Rocky' and 'Sandy' were laid to rest, after completing their tunnelling journeys earlier this month.

The cutterheads and shields for the project's two massive TBMs are currently being buried underneath the tunnels they have created - a practice regularly adopted by tunnelling projects in Australia and around the world.

Thiess John Holland Project Director Gordon Ralph said the two \$45 million TBMs were custom built for the Airport Link project and this solution reduces the complexity involved in removing the cutterheads and shields via a shaft to the surface including, avoiding the need for additional disruptive surface work in the Lutwyche area.

"The TBMs have been lowered into purpose built shafts below the floor of the Airport Link tunnels and are currently being fully encased in concrete," Mr Ralph said.

"The two burial pits measure 14.5 metres wide and 16.5 metres deep and will require 2,500m³ of concrete pumped continuously over 24 hours to fully bury the machines," he said.

"Holes have been cut into sections of the shield to ensure the complete internal and external encasement of the machine.

"By encasing the machines in concrete, no ground water will be able to come into contact with the machine shields and cutterheads, eliminating any possible contamination.

"The last 180 metres of each machine, containing the back-up gantries and conveyor belts, are currently being removed for recycling and reuse where possible."

With tunnelling now complete across the project, demobilisation is underway of the tunnel support facilities located in Kalinga Park including the 2km long overland conveyor, grout plant and chilled water.

"With less than 12 months until project completion, the project is in its final phase of construction and fit-out, ready for a mid-2012 opening," said Mr Ralph.

"As activity on the project transitions from tunnel excavation, the focus will move to providing connectivity between the tunnels and the existing road network. Improved connectivity for local communities will also be delivered through new pedestrian pathways and community parks and green space," he said.

Scheduled to be open in mid- 2012, the projects are now 80% complete with nearly 15 kilometres of tunnels and ramps excavated between Bowen Hills and Toombul.

Once operational, the Airport Link will be the first major motorway connecting Brisbane's CBD with the airport, providing high speed underground travel and eliminating 18 sets of traffic lights.

In excess of twenty million hours have been worked to date and the projects have surpassed their expected peak employment bringing the jobs total to more than 4,300. The projects are creating 12,000 direct and indirect jobs.

Once operational the Airport Link will improve travel times in a city currently experiencing the worst peak hour traffic in the country providing six new lanes for drivers between Bowen Hills and Kedron and four new lanes between Kedron and Toombul.

Combined, Airport Link and the Northern Busway (Windsor to Kedron) are expected to reduce traffic on Lutwyche Road by up to 40%.

The project, which is being designed and constructed by Thiess John Holland, along with the Northern Busway (Windsor to Kedron) and the Airport Roundabout Upgrade, is part of a massive \$4.8 billion infrastructure investment on Brisbane's Northside.

Airport Link TBM - Fast Facts

- Model: Earth Pressure Balance
- Cutterhead diameter: 12.48 metres (largest machines ever used in Australia)
- Weight: 3,600 tonnes
- Length: 195 metres long, slightly longer than Suncorp Stadium playing field
- Cost: \$45 Million and took 12 months to build and a further 3 months to assemble at Toombul.
- Cutterhead contains up to 80 x 17 inch cutters made of hardened steel
- Approximately 22 workers to operate a TBM
- Travels up to 55m below the surface
- Equipped to install full-circle concrete tunnel lining during excavation

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