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Australia's Largest Tunnel Boring Machine Begins Tunnelling

Premier Anna Bligh was joined by the winners of the Tunnel Boring Machine naming competition today to signal the start of TBM tunnelling from the Kalinga Park worksite.

The massive machines were named Rocksy and Sandy, by 6 year old Emile Bragard and his sister, 4 year old Lila Bragard.

The brother and sister, who's father is an Airport Link's tunnelling engineer, came up with the names after hearing their dad talk about the varied ground conditions, including the sand and rock the machines will encounter on their 2.5km journey from Kalinga Park to Lutwyche.

Their entry was one of the 223 entries received during the seven week competition.

"Today is a momentous occasion heralding the start of TBM tunnelling on one of the most significant infrastructure projects in our city's history," Ms Bligh said.

"Today Rocksy will begin excavating the eastbound tunnel with Sandy scheduled to start next month in the westbound tunnel.

"The scale of these machines is just incredible. They are the largest of their type ever to operate in Australia and they are working on the largest road tunnel project in our history," she said.

The launch of the first TBM also included the blessing of the patron saint of tunnelling, Saint Barbara by Very Reverend Dr Father Adrian Farrelly of St Agatha's Parish at Clayfield.

The statue of St Barbara was placed near the entrance of the Airport Link tunnel to provide good luck and safety to the workers throughout the twelve month excavation of the TBM tunnel from Kalinga Park to Lutwyche.

Premier Anna Bligh wished the tunnellers a safe journey to Lutwyche and commended the rest of the project for its safe performance in the tunnels to date.

"Almost at the half-way point of project's construction program and spend, 5 kilometres of Airport Link tunnelling is now complete.

"10 million hours have been worked to date and the projects have surpassed their expected peak employment by an additional 800 workers bringing the jobs total to 3,400. The projects are now expected to create 12,000 direct and indirect jobs.

Minister for Infrastructure and Planning said today also marked the start of operation for the custom-built covered conveyor system, transporting the spoil from the TBMs directly to the project's spoil handling facility on Nudgee Road.

"This 1.8km conveyor system will transport up to 2,600 tonnes of spoil per hour and that means we'll be able to remove up to 80,000 spoil truck movements from local roads on Brisbane's Northside," Mr Hinchliffe said.

"TBM tunnelling impacts are likely to be minor, however extensive monitoring of the ground conditions, vibration and noise will be carried out during excavation.



Premier of Queensland

“Residents will receive direct notification two weeks prior to the TBMs approaching their property and the projects community relations team will also be conducting regular doorknocks as tunnelling progresses.

“Measures such as these have been taken to try to limit the disruption caused by this vitally important project as much as possible,” he said.

Thiess John Holland Project Director Gordon Ralph said today marked the beginning of the first stage of the TBM launch.

“At 195 metres, Rocksy is longer than Suncorp Stadium and therefore has to be launched in two stages,” Mr Ralph said.

“Stage one will see the front half of Rocksy tunnel approximately 130 metres in four weeks and then stop for six weeks, whilst the rear of the machine is assembled within the launch box.

“Once final assembly is complete, Rocksy will begin work again-excavating the tunnel and progressively installing concrete segments to form the tunnel lining as she moves forward at about 85 metres per week.

“Tunnelling from Kalinga Park to Lutwyche will take approximately 12 months, working around the clock, seven days a week,” he said.

CEO of BrisConnections Dr Ray Wilson congratulated the Toombul team for all their hard work over the last 19 months, completing construction of the launch box and preparing the site for today’s start of TBM tunnelling..

“Today’s launch brings our team one step closer to the operation of Airport Link in June 2012.

“With over \$2 billion expended on the projects, excellent progress has been achieved but significant work remains to be completed before this critical piece of infrastructure for South East Queensland can open for traffic in June 2012” Dr Wilson said.

By mid-2012, Airport Link, in conjunction with the Airport Roundabout Upgrade, will remove up to 18 sets of traffic lights for motorists travelling from the city to Brisbane Airport and Australia Trade Coast, reducing travel time by up to 50%.

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 largest road infrastructure projects currently under construction in Australia.

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