



**Rachel Nolan MP**  
**Minister for Transport**

## **Media release**

Friday 18 June, 2010

### **Airport Link Project Team Celebrates First Tunnel Breakthrough**

Transport Minister Rachel Nolan joined hundreds of workers today in a celebration to mark the first tunnel breakthrough in construction of Airport Link, Australia's longest road tunnel.

The breakthrough occurred in the northbound Airport Link tunnel 629 metres from the project's Truro Street tunnel Portal and 833 metres from the Bowen Hills end.

The 135-tonne roadheader travelling south from Windsor cut through the tunnel face 22 metres below the surface of Lutwyche Road.

Ms Nolan congratulated the 200-plus workers from Thiess John Holland's Truro Street and Bowen Hills tunnelling teams who were on site to celebrate.

"The tunnelling teams have been working 'round the clock' in Bowen Hills, Windsor, Kedron and Wooloowin to construct the two main 5.1 kilometre Airport Link tunnels," she said.

"Today they can celebrate this important feat, which represents a significant milestone in the Airport Link's construction program since 24-hour tunnelling operations commenced in May 2009.

"Tunnelling is a very difficult and dangerous job and there are a total of 15 kilometres of tunnels on this project.

"The Truro Street roadheader that broke through to the Bowen Hills tunnel, is one of 11 machines excavating the 1.5 kilometre distance of tunnel between Truro Street, Windsor and Federation Street, Bowen Hills.

"The tunnel crews have worked largely unseen to achieve this breakthrough and their hard work will leave an important legacy for the people of Brisbane.

"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 a massive 50%.

"Our record \$17.1 billion capital building program means that projects like this are delivering jobs and real results all over our State."

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Project Director Gordon Ralph said construction of Airport Link was being undertaken together with the Northern Busway (Windsor to Kedron), requiring 15 kilometres of tunnelling in total, encompassing road and busway tunnels and connecting ramps.

“A total of 17 roadheader machines are now carving out the Airport Link and Northern Busway tunnels – the largest number of roadheaders to be used on an Australian project, “ Mr Ralph said.

“The tunnelling machines, weighing up to 135 tonnes are making great progress with more than four kilometres of tunnel completed to date.

“The first roadheader began work in the Airport Link tunnels at Truro Street in March 2009 and there are now four roadheaders at Bowen Hills, eight in Lutwyche/Windsor, four at Kedron and one on site at Woolloowin.”

BrisConnections CEO, Dr Ray Wilson, said construction of the Airport Link tunnels is being undertaken using a combination of tunnel boring machines, roadheader machines and cut and cover tunnelling.

Thiess John Holland is currently preparing for another major milestone with launch of the first tunnel boring machine from Kalinga Park, Toombul in July 2010 to excavate the Airport Link mainline tunnel.

When the 6.7 kilometre Airport Link toll road is completed in 2012, it will allow fast travel from Brisbane city to the airport and northern suburbs, avoiding up to 18 sets of traffic lights.

The projects are part of a massive \$4.8 billion infrastructure investment on Brisbane's Northside.

**Media contact: Chris Ward 0418 424 654**