

**Premier and Minister for the Arts
The Honourable Anna Bligh**

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Premier inspects Airport Link as important milestone reached

One quarter of the tunnelling work has now been completed on the massive \$4.8 billion Airport Link project, Premier Anna Bligh said today.

To mark this important milestone, the Premier was joined by Deputy Premier Paul Lucas and Infrastructure Minister Stirling Hinchliffe to inspect progress.

The trio inspected the Bowen Hills section of the tunnel – unveiled for the first time since digging began at that section nearly a year ago.

“With four kilometres of tunnel now excavated we’ve passed the one quarter mark in the 15 kilometres required for the project,” Ms Bligh said.

“Work continues around the clock on the network of tunnels and ramps which will help alleviate one of Brisbane’s worst traffic headaches - congestion in the city’s north.

“One of the most significant advantages of the Airport Link project will be slashing traffic on Lutwyche Road by around 40 per cent.

“When the six lanes of Airport Link open in around two years, motorists will be able to avoid Lutwyche Road altogether, driving straight onto Gympie and Stafford roads, or onto Sandgate Road and the East West Arterial instead.

“People traveling to the North Coast, the Airport or just wanting to get on to the Gateway Arterial will be able to use the Airport Link tunnels to avoid some of the most congested arterial roads in our city,” Ms Bligh said.

Deputy Premier Paul Lucas said the tollway and Northern Busway (Windsor to Kedron) were due to be operational in mid 2012.

“This project is currently employing more than 2,700 people and this number is expected to grow to well over 3000 in coming months.”

“Work at the Bowen Hills site is progressing well with four road headers currently working in the tunnels.

“A massive 274-metre cavern is also under construction which will form a Y junction for the Lutwyche Road off-ramp.

“When complete it will be the largest cavern built in Brisbane,” Mr Lucas said.

Mr Hinchliffe said that at the other end of the project’s corridor at Toombul, two Tunnel Boring Machines (TBM) would tunnel four kilometres to Lutwyche starting in a few months.

"The first machine is being assembled at Toombul and the second is expected to be unloaded later this week from a ship which has transported it from Germany," Mr Hinchliffe said.

"With Australia's largest cutterhead, the 3600 tonne Tunnel Boring Machine will be delivered to Australia in three shipment containers and will be transferred to the Project's Kalinga Park construction site in Toombul.

"Once fully assembled the machine will be 195 metres in length, longer than Suncorp Stadium's playing field.

"Once the Tunnel Boring Machines are operational, a two-kilometre conveyor will transport about 1.1 million tonnes of soil excavated from the Toombul site to Nudgee Road.

"2600 tonnes of spoil, equivalent to about 81 truck and dog trailer loads, will be moved every hour by the conveyor which is now under construction."

Mr Hinchliffe said a project of this scale has never been seen before.

"While the decision to build a tunnel rather than a surface highway will significantly reduce impacts in the future, I thank the people of the area for their patience during this massive construction period," he said.

The project, which is being designed and constructed by Thiess John Holland, along with the Airport Link toll road and the Airport Roundabout Upgrade, is part of a massive \$4.8 billion infrastructure investment on Brisbane's Northside.

AIRPORT LINK FAST FACTS:

- More than six million hours worked
- One million plants, including 5300 mature trees, to be planted during project
- 10,000 direct and indirect jobs generated
- 40 per cent traffic reduction expected on Lutwyche Rd in 2012
- In 2016, the busway will cater for 47,000 public transport trips per day – more than five times the current number.
- In 2026, there will be a bus every 20 seconds.
- 25 bridges, 15km of tunnels and 7km of new roads complete with bus and transit lanes to be constructed
- 18 sets of traffic lights to be removed
- More than 13km of new or improved cycle and walkways and three hectares of new parkland in 2012
- 13 x 140 tonne roadheader machines in use on tunnels (this will rise to 16 in coming months)

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