

**Minister for Infrastructure and Planning
The Honourable Stirling Hinchliffe**

Wednesday, December 02, 2009

FIRST AIRPORT LINK TUNNEL BORING MACHINE ARRIVES FROM GERMANY

Australia's largest Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM), purpose-built for the Airport Link project, has arrived at the Kalinga Park worksite from Germany in 25 40-foot containers.

Minister for Infrastructure and Planning Stirling Hinchliffe said the TBM, worth \$45 million, will begin excavating the Airport Link's mainline tunnels from Kalinga Park in the first half of next year.

"Work to prepare for assembly of the 3,600 tonne machine will commence immediately. The project's second TBM, an identical twin, was factory tested in October and is expected to arrive in Brisbane in March for assembly," the Minister said.

"The TBMs are longer than Suncorp Stadium's playing field at 195 metres and feature the largest ever disc-cutters to operate in Australia. At 12.48m in diameter the cutting head is equivalent to half the width of an Olympic swimming pool.

"The TBM parts will be lowered into the ground at Kalinga Park for assembly through a giant launch box measuring 106 metre long and 20 metres deep.

"The machines will then travel up to 55metres below the surface and are expected to excavate approximately 85 metres of rock per week, depending on ground conditions.

"The arrival of the first TBM is another major milestone for this vital \$4.8 billion congestion busting project which will cut traffic on busy arterial roads by up to 40 percent and give drivers the chance to avoid 18 sets of traffic lights between Bowen Hills and Brisbane Airport.

"Just over a year since construction began 10 roadheader machines have already excavated more than one kilometre of tunnel and the much needed replacement of the notorious Airport Roundabout with a new flyover is well underway.

"Work is also advancing on the Northern Busway (Windsor to Kedron) which is being constructed together with the Airport Link project.

"More than 2,000 people have been employed so far on the projects which are expected to generate up to 10,000 direct and indirect jobs," the Minister said.

BrisConnections CEO, Dr Ray Wilson said the state-of-the art tunnelling machines were specially designed and manufactured in Germany for use on the Airport Link project.

"A world leader in tunnelling technology, Herrenknecht, spent nearly twelve months building the two tunnel boring machines," Dr Wilson said.

"These machines will be able to cut through rock six to eight times harder than concrete while also being able to operate in softer ground conditions.

"Each TBM will install a full circle concrete lining continuously as part of the excavation process and spoil will be transferred by a conveyor from the tunnel to a handling station 2km from the launch box at Toombul," he said.

Thiess John Holland Project Director, Gordon Ralph said together the projects required a total of 15 kilometres of tunnelling, encompassing road and busway tunnels and connecting ramps.

"Over four kilometres of the tunnels will be excavated by the massive Tunnel Boring Machines with an additional nine kilometres excavated by 15 roadheader machines and two kilometres excavated by Cut and Cover construction techniques," Mr Ralph said.

Each TBM requires a team of around 22 people to operate the machine.

Airport Link is being constructed jointly with the second stage of the Northern Busway (Windsor to Kedron) and the Airport Roundabout Upgrade, as part of a \$4.8 million investment on Brisbane's Northside. When complete, Airport Link will be the longest road tunnel in Australia.

Photographs available

Media Contact: 3224 8750