

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

Saturday, November 14, 2009

Airport link 4.5 million hours work done in first year of construction

Minister for Infrastructure and Planning Stirling Hinchliffe today congratulated the 2000 people working to build the massive Airport Link Projects in Brisbane's north.

Marking the first year of construction Mr Hinchliffe said nine major worksites were now operational and the first kilometre of tunnelling had been completed.

"The 2000 people employed on Australia's largest road project have already worked almost 4.5 million hours," Mr Hinchliffe said.

"The construction of Airport Link, the Northern Busway (Windsor to Kedron) and the Airport Roundabout Upgrade now spreads from Bowen Hills to Toombul.

"A year ago I was pleased to signal the start of construction at the Kedron Brook Building site. Today the area has been transformed with a 27-metre deep tunnel portal in place of the former car park.

"In three years the Airport Link tunnel will allow motorists to travel between the CBD and the Airport, avoiding 18 sets of traffic lights and shaving as much as 17 minutes off the journey between the CBD and Toombul during peak periods.

"At the project's peak 2,600 people will be working onsite, with about 10,000 direct and indirect jobs being created for Queensland.

"This week saw the beginning of the end of the city's worst bottleneck, the Airport Roundabout – TJH crews have begun the installation of 50 super T's as part of the project which will see the roundabout replaced with a 750-metre long overpass.

"Everyone in the South East will benefit when these projects are completed in mid-2012, and we all owe a vote of thanks to the local community who live and work in amongst the intense construction activity taking place in their neighbourhoods."

Mr Hinchliffe said today's tunnelling milestone was an important one for the congestion busting projects.

"The Airport Link project will use 16 roadheaders - the largest number of roadheaders to be used on an Australian project - 10 are already operating underground 24 hours a day," he said.

"Above ground, 25 piling and drill rigs and 26 cranes are working. By mid-2012, these works will amount to 15 kilometres of tunnels, more than seven kilometres of new road and 25 bridges."

BrisConnections CEO, Dr Ray Wilson said he was proud of what had been achieved on the projects to date but there was still plenty more to come.

"The first of two 195-metre long Tunnel Boring Machines (TBMs) is on schedule to arrive next month," he said.

"The TBMs will have the largest cutting disc diameter ever to be used in Australia and will require up to 22 workers to operate each machine.

"The second TBM will arrive in March next year and TBM tunnelling is expected to start in May."

Thiess John Holland Project Director Gordon Ralph said one of the challenges for the construction contractor was the ongoing identification and relocation of essential services.

"In the last year, the project has relocated six kilometres of electrical cables, 18 kilometres of telecommunication lines, 10 kilometres of gas pipelines and almost two kilometres of water lines," Mr Ralph said.

"The extensive services work has certainly been a challenge for the project, and while we have achieved great progress to date, services work is continuing and is expected to be complete across all project precincts by late 2010.

"Relocations and the installation of new services can be disruptive in local streets, and we thank the community for their patience as we progress with this work."

Encompassing three projects in one, the Airport Link project team is building the Airport Link motorway, Airport Roundabout Upgrade, and the second stage of the Northern Busway (Windsor to Kedron) which will cater for 47,000 public transport trips per day by 2016 – five times more than currently made through these areas.

Thirteen kilometres of new and upgraded cycle and pathways are also being delivered as part of the project, and more than three hectares of new parkland will be provided to the community at completion.

Replacing the existing Airport Roundabout with a fast diamond intersection, and constructing a new 750-metre flyover will solve one of Brisbane's worst bottlenecks by improving traffic flow to and from the Brisbane Airport and Australia Trade Coast precinct.

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