



The Hon Catherine King MP
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development and Local
Government

The Hon Kate Thwaites MP
Member for Jagajaga



The Hon Jacinta Allan MP
Premier of Victoria

The Hon Danny Pearson MP
Minister for Transport Infrastructure

MEDIA RELEASE

TUNNELLING STARTS ON NORTH EAST LINK PROJECT

Tunnelling has started on the Australian and Victorian governments' North East Link Project in Melbourne's northeast.

The first tunnel boring machine (TBM) is now digging the 6.5-kilometre tunnel between Watsonia and Bulleen – which will take 15,000 trucks off local roads and slash travel times by up to 35 minutes.

The TBM is the first of two massive machines that will dig up to 15 metres per day and up to 45 metres underground.

The 4,000 tonne machines will also install tunnel walls made of approximately 44,000 individual concrete segments made locally in Benalla.

More than 100 tunnel workers have undergone specialised training to work below ground, with the Victorian Tunnelling Centre at Holmesglen providing state-of-the-art training.

The tunnels will be built using 100 per cent renewable electricity.

Dirt and rock from the tunnels will be re-used across the North East Link and other transport sites where possible – with a significant amount of dirt also helping rehabilitate a former quarry at Point Wilson and the former Orica site in Deer Park.

The two TBMs have been named Zelda and Gillian, to honour two ground-breaking Victorian women.

The late West Heidelberg resident Zelda D'Aprano AO was a renowned women's rights activist who worked tirelessly to close the gender pay gap and established the Women's Action Committee.

Dr Gillian Opie is a neonatal paediatrician at the Mercy Hospital for Women in Heidelberg and founded Australia's first breast milk bank – providing sick and premature babies in Melbourne's neonatal intensive care units with safe, screened and pasteurised milk.

More than 6,700 people are currently working across the project – which will create 12,000 jobs before completion in 2028.

At the 2024-25 Budget the Australian Government committed an additional \$3.25 billion to the North East Link Project to make a total contribution of \$5 billion, with the Victorian Government providing the remaining project funding.

Quote attributable to Victorian Premier Jacinta Allan:

“The start of tunnelling on the North East Link is a major milestone on a project that will get thousands of trucks off local roads.”

Quote attributable to Federal Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government Catherine King:

“Building the North East Link is critical to future-proof Melbourne’s road network for the growing population of Victoria.”

Quote attributable to Victorian Minister for Transport Infrastructure Danny Pearson:

“Victoria’s missing link has been talked about for decades – we’re getting on with building it to make sure our freeways are keeping up with our growing state.”

Quote attributable to Federal Member for Jagajaga Kate Thwaites:

“This shows the Commonwealth is once again partnering with Victoria in infrastructure, in job creation and in building the economy, as we deliver this important project for our local community.”

Quote attributable to Victorian Member for Bundoora Colin Brooks:

“We’ve started building the longer 6.5-kilometre tunnels that the community asked for, which will get trucks off local roads, slash travel times, and create thousands of jobs.”

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