



Speech by  
**Grace Grace**

**MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL**

Hansard Tuesday, 17 August 2010

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## **AIRPORT LINK**

**Ms GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (11.46 am): On Friday, 18 June, transport minister Rachel Nolan and I joined hundreds of workers in a celebration to mark the first tunnel breakthrough in the 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 road header, travelling south from Windsor, cut through the tunnel face 22 metres below the surface of Lutwyche Road.

The chair of BrisConnections, Trevor Rowe, and the CEO, Dr Ray Wilson, joined the minister and me in congratulating the 200-plus workers from the Thies John Holland Truro Street and Bowen Hills tunnelling teams who were on-site to celebrate. The tunnelling teams have been working around the clock in Bowen Hills, Windsor, Kedron and Wooloowin to construct the two main 5.1-kilometre Airport Link tunnels. This important feat represents a significant milestone in Airport Link's construction program since 24-hour tunnelling operations commenced in May 2009.

It was a great experience to be there and to see the tunnel machines breaking through the wall. It was an experience I had not encountered previously. It was great to have some members of the public there, particularly Mrs Beres McCallum of the Windsor and Districts Historical Society. BrisConnections presented her with a mounted plaque of Brisbane Tuff and other rocks that have been excavated. I know that that plaque now adorns a wall in the Windsor and Districts Historical Society's building.

As we know, tunnelling is a very difficult and dangerous job, and there are a total of 15 kilometres of tunnel on this project. The Truro Street road header 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. It is a dangerous job, and occupational health and safety is very important in that environment. 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. It was great to welcome them after the breakthrough, as they came through the newly created hole from one side to the other.

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 TradeCoast, reducing travel time by up to a massive 50 per cent. Our record \$17.1 billion capital building program means that projects like this are delivering jobs—currently more than 2,700 and this is expected to grow to well over 3,000 in the months ahead.

Airport Link has been 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. What a milestone! The tunnelling machines, weighing up to 135 tonnes, are making great progress, with more than four kilometres of tunnel completed to date.

I also acknowledge the residents living around this massive project. I want to personally thank them for their patience. We know that there is much disruption. I will continue to work with them to minimise the

level of impact of this construction site. I understand their issues and problems. I thank the minister and his office, and CNI, in all working together to achieve better outcomes for the residents in the area. I must stress that their patience and goodwill in regard to this massive project—probably the biggest that Brisbane has ever seen—is something that I welcome. I will guarantee that I will continue working with them to ensure that the disruption is minimal.

Here are some important facts: more than six million hours worked; one million plants, including 5,300 mature trees to be planted during the project; 10,000 direct and indirect jobs generated; 40 per cent traffic reduction expected on Lutwyche Road 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. This is a great project for Brisbane. We know it has been disruptive for the residents, and I thank them.