



Barry O'Farrell MP

Premier of NSW

Minister for Western Sydney

MEDIA RELEASE

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GETTING ON WITH THE JOB: WORK STARTS ON NORTH WEST RAIL LINK FOUR TUNNEL BORING MACHINES

NSW Premier and Minister for Western Sydney Barry O'Farrell and Minister for Transport Gladys Berejiklian today announced work has started on building the four huge tunnel boring machines that will deliver the \$8.3 billion North West Rail Link's 15km of twin tunnels.

"We're getting on with the job of delivering the North West Rail Link. The tunnel boring machines have been ordered and they're being prepared right now," Mr O'Farrell said.

"The North West Rail Link is the biggest public transport infrastructure project in Sydney since the Harbour Bridge almost a century ago," he said.

"The first tunnel boring machine will be in the ground next year and the three others will follow soon after.

"This is an important development in this exciting project and it will give the community confidence the North West Rail Link will be delivered by the NSW Liberals & Nationals Government.

"The North West Rail Link forms a key part of our record infrastructure commitment, which also includes the South West Rail Link, WestConnex and the redevelopment of Blacktown and Campbelltown hospitals," Mr O'Farrell said.

Ms Berejiklian said the four tunnel boring machines (TBMs) are part of the \$1.15 billion tunnelling contract for the North West Rail Link, which was awarded in late June to Thiess John Holland Dragados.

The joint venture has contracted top-tier manufacturer NFM Technologies in Lyon, France, to design, build and deliver the four machines which will cut the 15km tunnels between Bella Vista and Epping – Australia's longest rail tunnels.

"This is highly-specialised equipment which is being made specifically for the North West of Sydney by a world-leader in tunnelling which has built more than 100 of these machines for a wide range of geological conditions," she said.

Ms Berejiklian said the TBM parts are expected to be shipped to Port Botany while the huge cutter heads are planned to be shipped separately to either the Port of Newcastle or Port Kembla, where they will be transported to Sydney on the back of a heavy lift semi-trailer as a wide load.

“It will be a major logistical feat in itself just getting these huge machines into Sydney – most likely in the middle of the night under escort to minimise the disturbance to as many motorists as possible,” she said.

In a mammoth engineering and logistical feat, each of the four machines will:

- Weigh more than 900 tonnes, or the same as about 570 Holden Commodores;
- Be made up of 38 large pieces and also fill a further ten, 40-foot shipping containers;
- Be built using components from across Europe, with the complex and precision components designed and pre-assembled in France then sent to China where steel structures like the cutter heads and back up trailers will be made;
- Be assembled and tested overseas before being pulled apart and shipped to Australia;
- Take about eight weeks to re-assemble when all the pieces arrive in Sydney;
- Be purpose built to cut through Sydney sandstone reliably and safely, at a rate of about 120m a week on average; and,
- Be staffed by a team of 15 people on every shift, operating 24 hours a day seven days a week.

The four TBMs use about 400 times as much power as an average house and between them will use 29km of conveyor belts to remove the crushed rock from deep underground – the distance from the Sydney CBD to Blacktown.

“Of course, when the time comes next year we will keep the community fully informed – and we even expect to see some people lining the streets to get a glimpse of the remarkable machinery which is turning the North West Rail Link into a reality.”

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