

# Media Release

**The Hon Jacinta Allan MP**

Acting Premier

Minister for Transport and Infrastructure

Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop

Minister for Commonwealth Games Delivery



Thursday, 19 January 2023

## HUGE YEAR AHEAD FOR VICTORIA'S LARGEST EVER ROAD PROJECT

From Watsonia to Bulleen, major works are restarting on the Andrews Labor Government's North East Link for 2023 – marking the start of a massive year for Victoria's largest ever road project.

Touring the project this morning, Acting Premier Jacinta Allan announced the first pieces of the enormous tunnel boring machines (TBMs) are now being built, ready to arrive later this year. Five road headers, including some that were used on the Metro Tunnel, are being refurbished to dig a section of the North East Link tunnels in Bulleen.

Work has also started on the TBM launch box in Watsonia – where the machines will begin their journey south – with more than 200 piles installed. The launch box will be 40 metres deep and 200 metres long and will include more than three Olympic swimming pools worth of concrete and 1,700 tonnes of steel.

This year will also bring a hive of activity north of Lower Plenty Road, with crews excavating the site to prepare to build ramps into the North East Link tunnels.

More action is taking place in Bulleen, with a section of Bulleen Road being moved further west to make way for the construction of the Yarra Link Green bridge and the major interchange connecting an upgraded Eastern Freeway to the tunnels – making sure traffic can keep safely moving on this busy road during construction.

This year will also see the completion of Bulleen Park and Ride, contracts awarded for the Ring Road upgrade and the first section of the Eastern Freeway overhaul, and a tender process for the remaining Eastern Freeway upgrades – which will add 45 kilometres of new lanes, saving drivers 11 minutes between Springvale Road and Hoddle Street.

North East Link is a significant employer for Victoria, with 2,200 workers already on the project, including 160 apprentices, trainees and cadets, who have worked more than 143,000 hours. Over the life of the project, North East Link will create 10,000 good local jobs for Victorians.

The Labor Government is investing more than \$20 billion in Melbourne's north-east to improve the transport network, including North East Link, Hurstbridge Line Upgrade, Fitzsimons Lane Upgrade and removing 21 level crossings.

The North East Link tunnels and freeway upgrades will be complete in 2028, slashing travel times by up to 35 minutes, and taking 15,000 trucks off roads – jointly funded by the Australian and Victorian governments.

### Quote attributable to Acting Premier and Minister for Transport and Infrastructure Jacinta Allan

*"We're not wasting a minute making progress on North East Link. With tunnel boring machines on the way, locals are going to see a huge amount of construction as we get ready to start tunnelling in 2024."*

### Quote attributable to Member for Ivanhoe Anthony Carbines

*"This project has been talked about for a long time, so it is exciting to be preparing for the arrival of our TBMs – this is another important step in removing congestion from local roads."*

### Quote attributable to Member for North-Eastern Metropolitan Region Sonja Terpstra

*"There is so much to look forward to on North East Link this year – from the completion of Bulleen Park and Ride to the completion of the TBM launch box. This project is going to be a game changer for so many Melburnians."*

**Media contact:** Nadia Dimattina 0438 701 306 | [nadia.dimattina@minstaff.vic.gov.au](mailto:nadia.dimattina@minstaff.vic.gov.au)