



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



The Hon Jenny Aitchison MP
NSW Minister for Regional Transport and
Roads

MEDIA RELEASE

LIGHT AT THE END OF THE COFFS HARBOUR BYPASS TUNNEL

In a major milestone for one of regional Australia's biggest infrastructure projects, the first phase of the multi-billion-dollar Coffs Harbour Bypass is complete.

The Coffs Harbour bypass tunnelling team working on either side of the 410-metre-long Gatelys Road Tunnel broke through the northbound tube on Monday 28 October.

Today, they have broken through the southbound tube, completing the first major phase of the three tunnels to be built as part of the bypass.

Each of the three tunnels will have two tubes, with each tube capable of carrying two lanes of traffic. There will also be room to accommodate cyclists.

The Australian Government is investing \$1.76 billion towards the project, with the remaining \$440 million investment provided by the New South Wales Government.

In a sign of how quickly things are moving for the tunnelling teams, a breakthrough at the 320-metre-long Shephards Lane tunnel is expected in mid-April next year.

The work comes despite a traditional tunnel boring machine not being feasible for use on the short tunnels due to the mobilisation time and cost.

Workers will now start excavating the tunnel floor, carry out the permanent tunnel lining works, install drainage, build the pavement, and complete the fit-out of the mechanical, electrical, fire, safety and intelligent transport systems.

All the equipment will then be tested and commissioned before the bypass is opened to the public.

The bypass is expected to open to traffic in late 2026.

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

"This is a major milestone for this nation-shaping project.

"During consultation ahead of the project in 2016, the people of Coffs Harbour were very clear they wanted tunnels instead of cuttings and it is great to see progress in bringing that to fruition.

“Being able to pass through from one side of this large hill to the other is a major achievement, and I look forward to the work over the next two years as the tunnels start to take their final shape.”

Quotes attributable to NSW Regional Transport and Roads Minister Jenny Aitchison:

“It’s great to see a major tunnel project in the regions that has created 600 jobs and will remove 12,000 vehicles from the CBD. This will reduce travel times and deliver vital safety improvements.

“We see and hear regularly about tunnel projects around Sydney where tunnellers bore largely through sandstone or similar softer materials, but here in Coffs it’s been more challenging due to the material and location.

“I want to thank the project team for their hard work and commitment to delivering this critical piece of enabling transport infrastructure for the Coffs region and the entire country.”

Quotes attributable to NSW Labor’s spokesperson for Coffs Harbour Cameron Murphy:

“The bypass, when it opens to traffic at the end of 2026, will make Coffs Harbour an even better place to live, work and visit.

“The tunnels are a major component of this project, and it is wonderful to see them progressing so well.”

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