

MEDIA RELEASE

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Smoking ceremony welcomes NorthConnex

A sacred smoking ceremony was held by local Indigenous leaders at the Northern Compound of the NorthConnex project to welcome the project to the area and mark the start of underground work.

Aboriginal Elders, Uncle Allen Madden and Uncle Max Eulo, carried out the ceremony at the Northern Interchange Compound, where excavation has begun in preparation for tunnelling.

“A smoking ceremony is one of the most significant ancient ceremonies performed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

“The ceremony involves smouldering various native plants to produce smoke which is believed to have cleansing properties and the ability to ward off bad spirits,” Mr Madden said.

NorthConnex Project Director, Robert Ioffrida said the Northern Interchange Compound is one of four tunnelling sites which, once tunnelling is finished, will be landscaped and regenerated.

“In the coming week, the first road header will be lowered at the Northern Interchange Compound to start underground tunnelling works. This will be followed by three more road headers over the coming months, which will be launched from the site to tunnel north to south.

“The lowering of the first road header is an important occasion and the smoking ceremony serves as an opportunity to pay our respects to the Guringai people, the traditional custodians of this land.” The smoking ceremony will also highlight NorthConnex’s commitment to increasing Indigenous participation in the project.

“Key to delivering major infrastructure projects is providing opportunities for employment and training. As Australia’s longest road tunnelling project, we are in a good position to work with our partners and stakeholders to create real opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people,” said Mr Ioffrida.

NorthConnex has set a target of five per cent of its employees to be people of Indigenous background and is looking for opportunities to work with Indigenous owned and operated businesses. The project is also supporting the CareerTrackers program and has engaged six interns on the project to date.

Tunnelling has already commenced at the Southern Interchange Compound and will start at the two remaining sites at Wilson Road and Trelawney Street around September this year.

The \$3 billion NorthConnex project, linking the M1 to the M2 to provide twin nine kilometre tunnels under Pennant Hills Road, will save motorists 15 minutes of travel time compared to using Pennant Hills Road when it opens in 2019.

For further information, contact SAMANTHA MURRAY on 0407 898 724.

NorthConnex

About NorthConnex

NorthConnex is a nine kilometre tunnel that will link the M1 Pacific Motorway at Wahroonga to the Hills M2 Motorway at West Pennants Hills, removing around 5,000 trucks off Pennant Hills Road daily.

Once built, it will be possible to avoid 40 traffic lights from the Pacific Highway to Sydney CBD. When complete in 2019, it will link Sydney's north to the orbital network and enable travel from Newcastle (M1) to Melbourne without a single set of traffic lights.