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TUNNELLERS PROGRESS ON VICTORIAN DESALINATION PROJECT

Two tunnel boring machines (TBMs) have successfully completed their work ahead of schedule on the Victorian Desalination Project.

The first TBM, 'Wonthaggi Maggie', finished boring the 1.2km seawater intake tunnel just before Christmas, while 'Rocking Ruby' recently finished work on the 1.5km outlet tunnel.

A total of 10,700 Australian-made concrete segments were used to construct the twin tunnels, which were both completed free of lost-time injuries and in accordance with the project's strict environmental performance requirements.

Thiess Tunnelling is now focused on their next stage of work – connecting the underground tunnels to the marine structures on the seabed.

"The marine team recently finished their work from the jack-up barge, installing the intake and outlet structures on the seabed and drilling risers into the seabed," said Glyn Edwards, Tunnelling Project Manager.

"The tunnelling team is now preparing to break through the side of the tunnels we've just finished building, allowing us to tunnel across to connect with the risers.

"It's precision work and needs an expert surveying team to ensure accurate alignment."

To complete the connection, a section of each tunnel is being lined with a reinforced steel 'ribcage', which will maintain the structural integrity of the tunnel and keep the tunnellers safe when they break through.

A mini excavator and mini dump trucks will then be used to excavate a short 'adit' tunnel a few metres long to connect with the riser. Finally, a glass-reinforced plastic pipe will be installed and encased in concrete, forming the final connection between the tunnel and the riser.

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NOTE TO EDITORS: High-resolution imagery available on request

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About Thiess Degremont

Thiess Degremont is AquaSure's design and construction contractor, responsible for delivering Australia's largest desalination plant by the end of December 2011. Thiess Degremont is a joint venture between Thiess, one of Australia's largest and most trusted construction and services companies, and Degremont, a world leader in reverse-osmosis desalination technology.