

WTC2028

Brisbane's bid for the World Tunnel Congress 2028: A key to Australia's sustainable future

By Jurij Karlovšek, Vice President ATS and Bid Lead for WTC2028 Brisbane

Australia stands at a critical juncture as it seeks to navigate the complex challenges of decarbonisation and water security in an era of global climate change. The proposed World Tunnel Congress (WTC) 2028 in Brisbane offers a unique opportunity to align these national goals with global expertise. As Australia strives to reduce its carbon footprint and secure its water resources, particularly in the hardest-to-abate sectors like mining and heavy industry, hosting the WTC will enable the country to showcase its commitment to sustainable infrastructure and innovative tunnelling solutions.

WHY is Australia bidding for WTC2028?

Our bid is driven by a strategic vision to leverage this global platform to accelerate Australia's energy transition and address water security challenges. The country is committed to achieving

net-zero emissions by 2050, a goal that demands substantial investment and innovation, particularly in sectors that are traditionally energy-intensive and water-reliant. The transition requires an estimated AUD 9 trillion by 2050, with significant financial resources allocated to renewable energy, sustainable transport and the electrification of industries.

Tunnelling and underground space utilisation are crucial components of this transition. By hosting WTC2028, Australia aims to position itself at the forefront of global discussions on sustainable infrastructure. The congress will bring together experts from around the world to exchange ideas and present cutting-edge technologies that can help Australia and other nations meet their decarbonisation goals.

Water security is an increasingly urgent issue as climate change

exacerbates droughts, floods and other extreme weather events. In this context, tunnelling for water infrastructure—such as desalination plants, pumped hydro energy storage, stormwater management systems, and underground reservoirs (water replenishment systems)—becomes vital. Hosting WTC 2028 will allow Australia to showcase how innovative tunnelling technologies can be applied to enhance water security not just domestically but globally.

WHAT does Australia offer the WTC?

Brisbane, the proposed host city for WTC2028, is emblematic of Australia's progress in sustainable infrastructure. The city is undergoing a transformation driven by projects such as the Cross River Rail, Brisbane Metro, and the Pumped Hydro Energy Storage Scheme. These projects are setting benchmarks for



The excitement and commitment of the bid team symbolise the country's readiness to host this prestigious event and contribute meaningfully to the global agenda of sustainability and resilience.

sustainable urban development.

The proposed theme for WTC 2028, “Energy Transition and Water Security,” is particularly relevant in the context of Australia’s ongoing efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change. The congress will focus on how tunnelling and underground engineering can contribute to these global challenges. Delegates will participate in technical tours, engage with innovative practices and explore new technologies being implemented across Australia. The congress will serve as a platform for knowledge exchange, where participants can learn from Australia’s experience and apply similar strategies in their own countries.

Moreover, Australia’s recent investments in desalination plants, underground water storage, and stormwater tunnels highlight the critical role of tunnelling in ensuring water security. These projects will be a key focus of the technical discussions at WTC2028, providing valuable insights into how other regions facing water scarcity can adopt similar approaches.

WHERE will WTC2028 take place?

Brisbane is an ideal location for WTC2028. The Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, with its state-

of-the-art facilities, can host over 1,200 delegates from around the world. The venue is located in the heart of the city, providing easy access to infrastructure projects that exemplify Australia’s advancements in tunnelling and underground space management. Brisbane’s role as the host city for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games further underscores its capacity to manage large-scale international events.

WHO is behind Australia’s bid?

The bid is being spearheaded by the ATS and Engineers Australia. These organisations are backed by the International Tunnelling and Underground Space Association (ITA) and supported by a coalition of government agencies, academic institutions and industry partners. This collaborative approach ensures that the congress will not only be a technical success but also a catalyst for further advancements in the field of underground space utilisation.

The world class team is working hard to make sure Australia’s bid meets with success at WTC2025 in Sweden. The team is chaired by Dr Jurij Karlovšek, and includes Annalena Baier, Brendan Henry, Senthilnath GT, Richard

Buckingham, Amanda Miller, Claire Martin, Marne Scholtz, and Nicole Appleby.

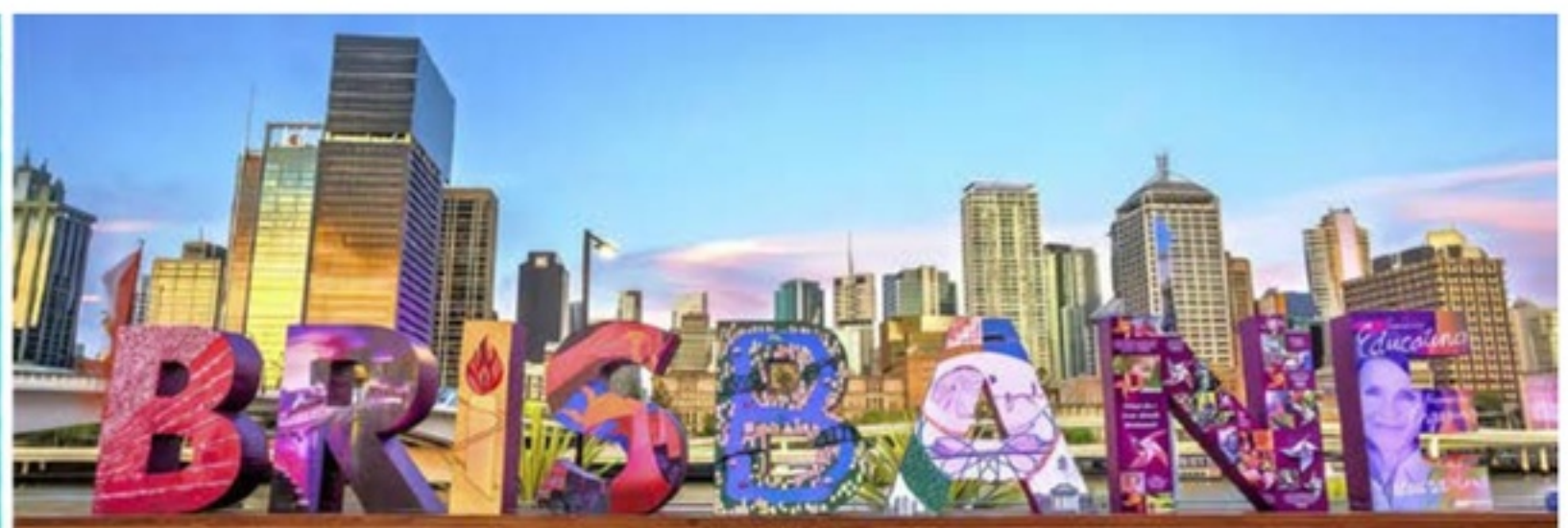
WHEN will WTC2028 happen?

The proposed dates for WTC 2028 are 31 March to 6 April 2028. The congress will feature a comprehensive programme, including technical sessions, exhibitions, and social activities designed to foster networking and collaboration among delegates.

Conclusion

Hosting the World Tunnel Congress 2028 in Brisbane represents a significant opportunity for Australia to lead global efforts in sustainable infrastructure, energy transition, and water security. The congress will bring together the best minds in the tunnelling industry, providing a platform for innovation, knowledge exchange, and collaboration.

Calling ATS Members: If you’re interested in contributing to the WTC 2028 bid, please contact the bid committee at ats@engineersaustralia.org.au with the subject line: Brisbane for WTC2028!



Australia’s expression of interest to host the

WORLD TUNNEL CONGRESS 2028

“ENERGY TRANSITION AND WATER SECURITY”

Proposed dates - Friday 31 March – Thursday 06 April 2028

