

Solar energy farm hits speed bump

By Mark Sawa

THE MUGGA Lane solar farm project has been delayed.

The \$30 million-plus renewable energy development was set for completion by September this year but that has been pushed back to 2015.

Chinese solar company Zhenfa Solar general manager for energy projects Qiao Han said there was a slight delay to the project due to "technical difficulties". However, he added it was not a big problem and it was not unexpected.

It is the Chinese company's first solar farm in Australia. Their focus leading up to the Mugga Lane development has been on commercial-scale projects.

"This is one of our first utility-scale projects," Mr Han said. "We've committed \$1.5 million already and we're going to spend another \$29 million to \$30 million."

The company will build the 13-megawatt facility on the corner of Mugga Lane and the Monaro Highway across 44 hectares. The solar farm will consist of 53,000 solar PV panels injecting energy into Actew-AGL's distribution

network, which will meet the electricity demands of 3250 ACT homes.

Mr Han said they were hoping the development application would go up for public exhibition this week.

Tuggeranong Community Council acting president Glenys Patulny said residents at a community meeting where an update on the solar farm was provided had accepted the project.

She said while there were a few concerns about animals in the area, horse agistments and the visual aspect of the solar farm, residents at the meeting were reasonably content with the proposal.

The company estimates the farm will produce a carbon offset of 480,000 tonnes over 25 years. The project is expected to generate more than 40 jobs during construction and up to three maintenance jobs during the course of its operational period.

Zhenfa Solar was established in 2004 and controls several large solar parks in China with a combined capacity of more than one gigawatt.