



HD Mugga Lane and Williamsdale **solar** farms to begin tracking sun by year's end

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LP A GPS-guided pile-driver sinking steel posts into the ground is swiftly changing the landscape in South Canberra for a new **solar** farm.

The steel posts will support 48,000 panels, and are being driven 1.6 metres into the ground in seconds, within 10mm of the blueprint's positioning point. Every day a hydraulic hammer thumps about 150 posts into the ground.

TD When work is finished, 7800 posts will support panels on the 13 megawatt farm, one of two under construction and due for completion for the ACT this year. The second project by Impact Investment Group further south at Williamsdale will generate 11 megawatts.

At Mugga Lane, UGL project manager Bruce van Breda says the work is like setting out a vineyard. "The aim is to have a low environmental impact, and retain the natural terrain," he said.

UGL is building the **solar farm on the corner of Mugga Lane and the Monaro Highway for the Australian Chinese firm Maoneng**. Maoneng's vice president Qiao Han said the farm is on a good, flat site on either side of Dog Trap Creek.

Building access roads into the area, UGL has been burying medium voltage cables along the way that allow internal electrical reticulation. Trenches for medium voltage connection to ActewAGL's network have been completed.

Mr Han says the ACT's **solar** projects are small, but internationally the industry is indebted to Australia.

"In **China** scales are much bigger, ultimately the **solar** voltaic cell is actually Australian technology that was originally developed out of the University of NSW," Mr Han said. "That technology was commercialised in **China** as well as Europe. A lot of the technology and breakthroughs we still owe to Australia research and development."

UGL will ramp up the workforce of between 30 and 40 people over the next two months, when peak construction begins on installing all the modules as well as the low voltage cabling.

Mr Han says set up costs are similar, but slightly higher, than the \$35 **million** project at Williamsdale. Both **solar** farms will have moveable panels that will track the sun throughout the day.

Impact Investment Group head of renewable infrastructure Lane Crockett says this adds nearly 20 per cent more **energy** than with fixed panels. "It is worth doing in Canberra and NSW, you would not do it in Queensland, [where] it is the nature of the resource that it does not work as efficiently," he said.

Williamsdale's **solar** farm has completed access roads and 80 per cent of the fencing in preparation for putting down piles to support photovoltaic panels.

"It is early, but things happen quite quickly on **solar** farms," Mr Crockett said. The workforce will peak at 80 people and the project completed by November.

The proponents say the ACT is Australia's front -runner in **solar** projects.

"The long term off-take agreements, or power **purchase** agreements, mean it has a reliable and predictable revenue stream for owners and investors, " Mr Crockett said.

"The ACT has proved how efficient, effective and cheap it is to transition your electricity sector, you are seeing now the Victorian Government is going to do something very similar," Mr Crockett said.

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