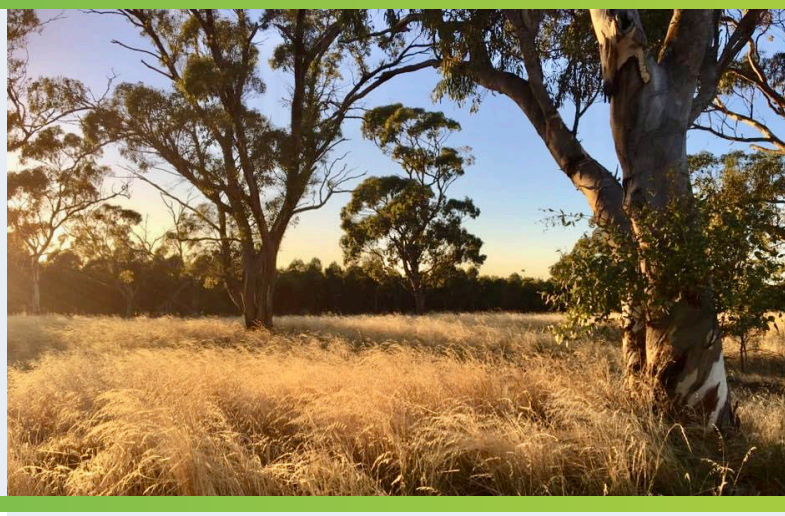
Environmental care

Valuing local knowledge

As we plan WiRES, we will take a careful approach to biodiversity conservation.

We will tap into local expertise to understand and focus on what's important and to minimise any impacts from the project.

We will work with communities and authorities to understand local environmental values.



Our approach to biodiversity

WiRES will take a careful and consultative approach to biodiversity conservation. We will:

- engage with the community, experts and authorities who understand and know the local environment
- thoroughly assess potential environmental impacts and study how the project might affect flora and fauna
- avoid impacts on the environment and biodiversity wherever possible, avoiding sensitive ecological areas, relocating pole positions if required, and designing the project to minimise potential impacts
- if we are not able to minimise or avoid impact, we will explore what offsets we can undertake, in accordance with legal requirements. This may include creating new habitats at another location
- continue to engage with the local community and key stakeholders.

What type of approvals will be required?

We will refer WiRES to the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments for their direction on relevant impacts assessment and the approvals processes required. These may include the following:

- a referral under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* to assess matters of national environmental significance, including flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places
- development of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) in conjunction with the relevant Registered Aboriginal Party, the Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BGLC), to outline what measures need to be in place to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage. The CHMP will be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*
- a referral to the Victorian Minister for Planning under the *Victorian Environment Effect Statement Act 1978* to determine if an Environment Effects Statement (EES) is required. This is the highest level of environmental scrutiny required in Victoria.

What is an EES?

An Environment Effects Statement (EES) provides for the integrated assessment of a proposed project (works) that has the potential for significant environmental effects.

An EES is a document formed by the compilation of various technical assessments of potential effects on environmental assets including the analysis of the means of avoiding, minimising and managing any identified adverse effects.

What is the EES process and who will assess the EES?

The process of preparing an EES can take many years to analyse potential impacts. Once prepared, an EES will be made available to the public for comment and is assessed by the Minister for Planning who ultimately determines if the impacts of the project are acceptable.

An EES can also include consultation with the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) for consideration of matters of national environmental significance.

How will the community be involved?

We believe that successful projects are grounded in strong engagement.

WiRES is planning extensive consultation with local landholders, stakeholders and community members to inform the extent of the project.

Further to our ongoing engagement with the community, any EES process will provide additional opportunities for the community to have a say on the project.

If you would like to register your interest in community engagement or be involved in WiRES:

- contact info@wiresco.com.au for more information
- subscribe to project updates at www.wiresco.com.au

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation legislation

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) is Commonwealth legislation designed to protect and conserve the environment and biodiversity matters at a national level.

It sets out a framework for assessing and managing activities that could impact matters of national environmental significance.

Transmission projects like WiRES fall under the EPBC Act if they are likely to or have the potential to impact matters of national environmental significance, which include:

- world heritage areas
- national heritage areas
- Wetlands of international importance (listed under the Ramsar Convention)
- listed threatened species and ecological communities
- listed migratory species
- Commonwealth marine areas
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park
- nuclear actions
- water resources that relate to coal seam gas development and coal mining development.