

Draft Water Services Strategy Engagement

Summary of findings and feedback analysis

1. Executive summary

A total of 128 submissions were received on the draft Water Services Strategy, including responses to the proposed Fees and Charges Policy, Fees and Charges Schedule, and draft Waivers and Remissions Policy.

Overall, submitters recognise the importance of safe, reliable drinking water and wastewater services, and there is general support for maintaining and improving service quality.

However, feedback indicates that support for the Strategy comes with clear expectations, and will be strongly influenced by how the Strategy addresses key issues of affordability, fairness, transparency, and trust in decision-making.

Key messages from submitters

- **Affordability is the dominant concern**
Submitters have a low tolerance for significant or sudden increases in charges. Many are seeking cost stability or reductions, rather than expanded services. Proposed increases (particularly in early years) are viewed as difficult for households to absorb.
- **Strong expectation that growth pays for growth**
There is clear and consistent feedback that new development should fully fund the infrastructure required to service it, with strong opposition to existing residents subsidising growth. This is a central issue in perceptions of fairness.
- **Demand for greater transparency and clarity**
A large proportion of submitters indicated uncertainty about pricing, particularly how charges are calculated and justified. There is a clear expectation for more detailed, accessible information on costs, investment, and future price paths.
- **Fairness and equity are critical to acceptance**
Submitters expect pricing and policies to reflect actual use and service received, with concerns raised about perceived inequities between different users (e.g. rural vs urban, connected vs non-connected). Fairness in cost allocation is a key driver of support.
- **Trust in the organisation is still developing**
Some submitters expressed low confidence in the governance and structure of Selwyn Water. Building trust through clear communication, accountability, and consistent decision-making will be critical.
- **Support for targeted assistance, but not broad subsidies**
There is general support for waivers or remissions in cases of genuine hardship or exceptional circumstances, but strong expectations that these will be tightly administered, transparent, and not create unfair cost burdens for others.

Strategic implications

Feedback indicates that Selwyn Water will be most effective where it:

- Demonstrates clear and equitable cost allocation, particularly ensuring growth does not increase costs for existing users
- Shows a strong and visible approach to managing affordability over time
- Provides greater transparency around pricing, investment decisions, cost drivers, and value for money
- Ensures policies are fair, consistent, and clearly applied
- Builds trust and confidence through improved communication, accountability, and evidence of efficient delivery
- Maintains a clear focus on water quality outcomes and customer confidence, including how these may evolve over time
- Provides a targeted, transparent approach to hardship support, aligned with broader affordability considerations

Alignment with the Statement of Expectations (SOE)

Analysis of feedback against the Statement of Expectations confirms that the draft Strategy is aligned with the SOE's intended outcomes, including delivering services that are safe, reliable, financially sustainable, and affordable.

However, feedback highlights the need for Selwyn Water to focus its attention on:

- Affordability as a key decision-making driver
- Fair allocation of costs, including growth funding
- Transparency and public accountability
- Confidence in investment decisions and value for money
- Maintaining customer confidence in water quality and service outcomes

Board considerations

Based on the strength and consistency of feedback, the following areas are identified as key priorities for Board focus:

- Affordability and the management of price increases
- Growth funding and cost allocation between users
- Transparency and clarity of pricing and decision-making
- Fairness and equity across customer groups
- Confidence in the scale and justification of investment
- Targeted customer support for hardship and vulnerability
- Ongoing focus on water quality and maintaining customer confidence

Management assessment and conclusion

Overall, our assessment is that the consultation does not indicate a need for a significant change in strategic direction. Rather, it confirms the importance of the direction already being taken.

The key message we take from the engagement is that the community wants Selwyn Water to demonstrate affordability, fairness, transparency, and sound stewardship.

The next 12 months provide an opportunity to strengthen the information, systems, and planning that will underpin future strategies, while continuing to build confidence that decisions are evidence-based, transparent, and in the long-term interests of the communities we serve.

Updates in response to engagement

The consultation feedback generally supports the outcomes sought by the Draft Water Services Strategy. The feedback reinforces the importance of affordability, growth funding, transparency, and fairness as key considerations for future decision-making.

We have updated the foreword in the Strategy to clearly articulate our commitment to the key areas of community focus, strengthening how these priorities are reflected in the overall direction of the Strategy.

The Strategy now reflects a commitment to:

- Affordability and the management of price increases
- Growth funding and cost allocation between users
- Transparency and clarity of pricing and decision-making
- Fairness and equity across customer groups
- Confidence in the scale and justification of investment
- Targeted customer support for hardship and vulnerability
- Ongoing focus on water quality and maintaining customer confidence

These commitments are intended to ensure that the issues most important to the community remain central to decision-making over the next 12 months and beyond.

Further additions include:

- Key findings have been incorporated into the community engagement section of the Strategy to support transparency and alignment with legislative expectations.

Overall conclusion

Submitters support the outcomes the Strategy is seeking to achieve, but have clear expectations about how these outcomes are delivered.

The key message is that affordability, fairness, transparency, and confidence in delivery are as important as the infrastructure itself, and will be critical to achieving community confidence and support

This feedback is consistent with the expectations set out in the SOE and reflects the organisation's current establishment phase. It reinforces the importance of using this initial 12-month Strategy period to refine key areas, strengthen frameworks, and improve clarity, so that future iterations of the Strategy are supported by stronger evidence, clearer communication, and greater public confidence.

2. Engagement summary

Selwyn Water carried out community engagement on the draft Water Services Strategy, Fees and Charges Policy, Fees and Charges Schedule and Waivers and Remissions Policy over a four-week period, from 4 May to 1 June 2026. A total of 128 submissions were received.

Submitters answered both structured responses and provided detailed written feedback. While not all respondents answered every question, there was strong engagement, particularly through written comments.

Where questions allowed multiple responses, percentages are based on total responses rather than number of submitters.

2.1 Location of submitters

Of the 128 submitters, 101 submitters (79%) provided an address.

Of those who provided an address, the highest number were from Darfield (24) and Rolleston (23), followed by Lincoln (7), West Melton (6), and Prebbleton (6).

The full breakdown is as follows:

Location	Number of submitters
Darfield	24
Rolleston	23
Christchurch	10
Lincoln	7
West Melton	6
Prebbleton	6
Coalgate	5
Springston	4
Leeston	3
Kirwee	3
Glentunnel	2
Hororata	1
Southbridge	1

Location	Number of submitters
Doyleston	1
Dunsandel	1
Sheffield	1
Whitecliffs	1
Springfield	1
Gore	1

3. Survey results and key insights

3.1 Property connection to water and wastewater

(Multi-select – percentages based on total responses)

- Town water supply: 39.8%
- Reticulated wastewater: 19.5%
- Private wastewater systems: 18.6%
- Restricted water supply: 10.0%
- Private bore: 4.5%
- Upper Selwyn Huts: 3.6%
- Not in Selwyn: 1.4%

Insight: The district has a diverse mix of supply and wastewater arrangements, reflecting both urban and rural service models.

3.2 What matters most to submitters

- Water quality (taste, clarity, confidence) – 17.3%
- Affordability – 16.4%
- Transparency and accountability – 11.8%
- Reliability – 11.6%
- Managing demand – 8.3%
- Long-term sustainability – 8.3%
- Customer service – 8.0%
- Resilience – 7.4%
- Environmental protection – 6.8%
- Supporting growth – 4.1%

Insight: Water quality and affordability are the clear top priorities, with strong emphasis also placed on trust and accountability.

Trade-offs relating to price increases

3.3 Support for bringing forward upgrades (if charges increase)

- Yes – 14.5%
- No – 31.6%
- It depends/comment only – 53.9%

Insight: The high proportion of “it depends” or comment only responses (53.9%) suggests that many submitters hold conditional views rather than clear support or opposition.

Written feedback indicates that support for bringing forward upgrades is highly dependent on who bears the cost, with many submitters emphasising that growth funding, affordability, and fairness must be addressed before supporting increased charges.

This highlights a reluctance to endorse higher costs without greater clarity, justification, and equitable cost allocation.

3.4 Support for additional investment to improve drinking water quality (if charges increase)

- Yes – 18.8%
- No – 33.3%
- It depends/comment only – 47.9%

Insight: The relatively low level of support (18.8%) indicates limited willingness to accept increased charges, even for improvements to water quality and reliability.

Written feedback (where provided) indicates that views were often influenced by questions about whether additional investment is necessary, whether current standards are sufficient, and whether proposed improvements are justified.

This highlights a reluctance to support higher costs without clear evidence of need, demonstrated benefits, and confidence that investment is proportionate and necessary.

Approach to pricing

3.5 Preferred pricing principles

- Charges based on services received – 21.3%
- Growth pays for growth – 19.0%
- Predictable/stable charges – 14.6%
- Keeping water charges affordable – 13.2%
- Fairness and equity – 12.8%
- Financial sustainability – 10.9%
- Intergenerational cost sharing – 8.1%

Insight: Submitters place the greatest importance on charges reflecting use (21.3%) and growth paying for growth (19.0%), indicating strong support for pricing that is directly linked to demand and does not shift costs onto existing users.

Predictable charges (14.6%), affordability (13.2%), and fairness (12.8%) also rank highly, showing that while cost allocation principles matter, there is a strong expectation that charges remain stable, manageable, and equitable for households.

Lower prioritisation of financial sustainability (10.9%) and intergenerational cost sharing (8.1%) suggests less emphasis on long-term financial mechanisms, particularly where these may increase costs in the short to medium term.

Overall, the results show that submitters favour transparent, user-focused pricing models, with a clear expectation that growth and higher use drive higher costs, rather than broad cost-sharing across the community.

3.6 Additional comments on pricing

A total of 78 submitters provided detailed comments on pricing.

Feedback was extensive and strongly expressed, with clear and consistent themes emerging across responses. Most comments focused on affordability, fairness, cost allocation, and transparency.

Key themes on pricing ranked in order of importance based on the frequency of feedback received

Theme	Key points raised	Illustrative comments	Insight
1. Affordability and cost pressures	- Rising household costs and financial pressure - Concern about large or sudden increases - Expectation increases align with inflation	"It's unaffordable... get it sorted." "We have an ever decreasing amount of money..." "Increases must be pegged to inflation."	Affordability is a critical constraint, with very low tolerance for significant increases. It underpins many other concerns.
2. Growth pays for growth	- Opposition to existing users funding growth - Developers should cover infrastructure costs - Uncertainty whether this is happening	"Developers are not contributing..." "Growth should pay for growth." "Are ratepayers subsidising development profits?"	There is strong consensus on this principle. Lack of confidence in its application is a key fairness concern.
3. Transparency and information	- Need clearer cost expectation - Breakdown of charges and investment	"How much will I pay per annum?" "Show the books." "A 30% increase needs explanation."	Lack of clarity is driving uncertainty and distrust. Improving transparency could

Theme	Key points raised	Illustrative comments	Insight
	Better explanation of price increases		significantly increase confidence.
4. User pays and fairness	- Charges should reflect actual usage - Avoid equal charges for unequal use - Consistency across users	"People should pay for what they use." "Higher use should mean higher cost." "Why are some users treated differently?"	Strong support for user pays, but only if applied fairly and consistently across all users.
5. Inequities between user groups	- Restricted vs metered users - Septic vs connected users - Rural vs urban differences - Seasonal/part-time users	"We pay even when we don't use it." "We shouldn't pay for services we don't receive." "Unused huts should pay less."	Perceived inequities are a significant risk to acceptance, particularly where users feel they are overpaying for limited service.
6. Overall cost levels and increases	- Concern about large increases (e.g. 30%) - Cumulative impact of rates - Lack of visible benefit	"We are paying more without benefit." "A 30% increase will cause concern."	Concern is not just cost, but value for money and whether benefits justify increases.
7. Governance and efficiency	- Cost of Selwyn Water structure - Staffing and admin costs - Contractor/consultant spending	"Too much bureaucracy." "Keep consultant costs down." "What are we paying for internally?"	Expectation of cost discipline and efficiency. Perceived inefficiency may undermine trust.
8. Polluter pays and commercial use	- Concerns about water bottling - Expectation polluters fund clean-up	"Companies bottling water should pay more." "Polluters should fund remediation."	Strong expectation that pricing reflects environmental responsibility and commercial impacts.
9. Pricing design and clarity	- Separate growth vs renewal costs - Compare debt options - Phase increases - Clarify cost allocation	"Compare 20-year vs 30-year repayment." "Clearly split growth and renewal costs."	Submitters want more sophisticated, transparent pricing design, particularly around long-term decisions.

Theme	Key points raised	Illustrative comments	Insight
10. Sustainability and demand management	- Rainwater harvesting - Greywater reuse - Reducing demand	"Promote household water tanks." "Support reuse to reduce demand."	There is support for long-term sustainable solutions, especially where they reduce system costs.

Overall, submitters emphasised affordability, fairness, and transparency as critical to pricing, with strong expectations that growth should fund growth, costs should reflect use, and pricing should not place undue burden on existing households.

3.7 Key improvements for the next decade

A total of 94 submitters responded to this question, which asked them to identify the single most important improvement Selwyn Water should make over the next decade.

While responses were wide-ranging, they showed a high degree of consistency in underlying themes throughout the engagement, demonstrating that submitters share a common set of priorities despite varied individual perspectives.

Key themes ranked in order of importance based on the frequency of feedback received

Improvement theme	What submitters want to see improved	Insight
1. Affordability and cost reduction	- Lower overall charges - Limit or smooth increases - Keep costs aligned with inflation	Affordability is the clear top priority. Many submitters are seeking cost control rather than new services, indicating low tolerance for further increases.
2. Water quality (nitrates and treatment)	- Reduce nitrate levels - Improve quality at source - Review chemical treatment (e.g. chlorine)	Water quality is a major concern, but views differ. There is a strong preference for preventing contamination rather than relying solely on treatment.
3. Fairness and growth funding	- Ensure growth pays for growth - Avoid existing users subsidising development - Fair pricing across all users	Fairness is a core expectation, particularly around growth. Demonstrating equitable cost allocation will be critical to public acceptance.
4. Transparency and communication	- Clearer information on costs and decision - Better communication with residents	There is a strong need to improve trust and understanding, with transparency seen as a key enabler of support.

Improvement theme	What submitters want to see improved	Insight
	Greater visibility of how pricing is set	
5. Cost efficiency and organisational performance	- Reduce waste and inefficiency - Better contractor performance - Control staffing and overhead costs	Submitters expect strong financial discipline. Improving efficiency is seen as a key lever to reduce costs.
6. Infrastructure and resilience	- Improve system resilience (e.g. outages) - Plan for growth proactively - Maintain and upgrade infrastructure effectively	There is recognition of the need for long-term planning, particularly as the district grows and faces future risks.
7. Sustainability and demand management	- Promote water conservation (e.g. tanks, reuse) - Reduce demand on potable supply - Encourage efficient water use	Submitters see value in sustainable solutions, especially where they can reduce long-term costs and infrastructure pressure.
8. Governance and structure	- Review role and cost of Selwyn Water - Reduce perceived bureaucracy - Strengthen accountability	Some concern still exists around governance, particularly where it is seen to increase costs without clear benefit.

Overall, the feedback highlights that the priority for improvement is not expanding services, but ensuring they are delivered in a way that is affordable, fair, and well understood. Cost control, equitable allocation of costs (particularly in relation to growth), and improved transparency are critical to building trust and acceptance moving forward.

3.8 Additional feedback on draft Strategy, Fees and Charges Policy and Fees and Charges Schedule

A total of 78 submitters provided additional feedback on the draft Water Services Strategy, Fees and Charges Policy and Schedule.

While feedback covered a wide range of issues, responses were highly consistent in key underlying concerns, particularly around:

- Affordability and pricing levels
- Who pays for growth
- Clarity and transparency of information
- Confidence in governance and delivery

Key themes ranked in order of prominence based on the frequency of feedback received

Theme	Key points raised	Illustrative comments	Insight
1. Affordability and price increases	- Significant concern about large increases (e.g. 18% and 30%) - Costs seen as unaffordable for many households - Expect increases to be limited or aligned with inflation	"This is a huge increase... clearly unaffordable." "I'm terrified of the bill." "Keep increases to a minimum."	Affordability is the dominant issue and greatest risk. High or poorly explained increases are likely to result in strong resistance.
2. Growth pays for growth	- Strong opposition to existing users funding development - Expect developers to pay full infrastructure costs - Concern this is not happening in practice	"I don't expect to pay for new developments." "Developers should pay for all growth." "Ratepayers have been paying too much."	There is very strong consensus on this principle. Demonstrating it clearly will be critical to maintaining trust.
3. Transparency and clarity of information	- Lack of clear information on costs and future charges - Limited understanding of pricing structure - Requests for better breakdowns and explanations	"What is it going to cost?" "Very little information is available." "Show the books."	A transparency gap is driving uncertainty and concern. Improved clarity could significantly increase confidence.
4. Trust and confidence in Selwyn Water	- Scepticism about the organisation and its creation - Concerns about accountability and responsiveness - Perception decisions do not reflect community views	"I don't trust you." "This organisation is not what ratepayers wanted."	There is a trust deficit influencing how all proposals are received. Trust-building is critical.
5. Fairness and equity of pricing	- Concerns about paying for services not received - Impact of fixed charges on low-use or low-income households	"We pay for water we don't receive." "A non-connected property imposes no cost." "Fixed charges hit low-income households hardest."	Perceived inequities are a key risk to acceptance. Pricing must clearly align with service received.

Theme	Key points raised	Illustrative comments	Insight
	Differences across user groups		
6. Pricing design and policy detail	- Questions about specific charges (e.g. serviceability, DCs) - Concern about changes to existing policies - Requests for clearer technical detail	"What is the justification for this increase?" "Development contributions are unclear."	Submitters are engaging in detail, highlighting the need for robust explanation and justification.
7. Governance and accountability	- Concerns about governance structure and oversight - Questions about roles and decision-making - Interest in stronger accountability mechanisms	"Who is accountable and how?" "How are these decisions made?"	Governance is a secondary but influential issue, particularly where linked to cost and trust.
8. Environmental responsibility / polluter pays	- Expectation that polluters fund water quality impacts - Concern about nitrate contamination - Focus on protecting source water	"Polluters should pay for the clean-up." "It's unfair ratepayers pay for degraded water."	There is a strong expectation of environmental accountability, reinforcing fairness concerns.
9. Social equity and affordability support	- Recognition of water as a basic need - Concerns for low-income or vulnerable households - Suggestions for rebates or pricing support	"Water is a fundamental human right." "Some households cannot afford these increases."	There is growing expectation that pricing incorporates equity and targeted support mechanisms.
10. Engagement and consultation	- Concerns about timing and accessibility of consultation - Difficulty accessing information or contacting staff - Desire for better engagement	"Very little information available." "Hard to get answers."	Improving engagement could help address information gaps and rebuild trust.

Overall, submitters acknowledge the need for investment in water services but have significant concerns about affordability, fairness, and transparency. Trust in how decisions are made, particularly around cost allocation and fairness, is a key factor influencing support for the proposed strategy.

Draft Waivers and Remissions Policy

3.9 Is the proposed approach fair and reasonable?

A total of 117 responses were received to the question of whether the proposed draft Waivers and Remissions Policy is fair and reasonable:

- Yes – 50.4%
- No – 13.7%
- Unsure – 35.9%

Insight: Responses indicate overall support for the proposed policy. However, the high proportion of “unsure” responses (35.9%) suggests significant uncertainty about how the policy will operate in practice, particularly in relation to eligibility, decision-making, and fairness.

While there is general support for providing assistance in appropriate circumstances, most submitters emphasised that this must be fair, clearly defined, and consistently applied.

Key issues raised by submitters

Several specific concerns were identified:

- Lack of clarity around eligibility, criteria, and who makes decisions
- Strong emphasis on fairness and consistency, with concern about unequal treatment or misuse
- Clear opposition to providing assistance to developers and large commercial entities
- Need for transparent processes and reporting to maintain public confidence
- Calls for robust assessment (e.g. means testing) to ensure assistance is directed to those in genuine need

Additional observation

Some submitters noted that the need for waivers reflects broader affordability pressures, suggesting that improving overall pricing may reduce reliance on assistance mechanisms.

3.10 Are there any situations where Selwyn Water should or should not provide help?

A total of 61 submitters provided feedback on the proposed approach for offering assistance (waivers or remissions) for drinking water and wastewater charges.

Responses show a wide range of views, but overall reflect a consistent tension between:

- Support for targeted assistance in genuine hardship, and
- A strong preference for personal responsibility and fairness to all ratepayers

Key themes from comments

Theme	What submitters are saying	Insight
Conditional support for assistance	- Mixed views overall - Support depends on circumstances - No blanket agreement for or against assistance	There is no clear consensus, but support is conditional. Assistance is acceptable only where it is clearly justified and limited.
Targeted hardship support	- Assistance should be provided for genuine hardship - Includes low-income households, elderly, and families under stress	There is broad support for a case-by-case safety net, rather than universal assistance.
Personal responsibility	- No help where costs are avoidable - Opposition to covering negligence (e.g. leaks not fixed) - Users should manage their own consumption	There is a strong expectation that individuals and businesses are responsible for their own actions and costs.
Opposition to assistance for businesses and developers	- Businesses and developers should fund their own costs - Resistance to subsidising commercial activity	Support is largely limited to households in need, with clear opposition to assisting commercial entities.
Fairness and consistency	- Assistance must be applied equally - No preferential treatment or "special deals" - Avoid shifting costs to others	Fairness is the central principle, reinforcing wider concerns about cost allocation and equity.
Support for exceptional circumstances	- Natural disasters or emergencies - Undetected leaks or faults - Temporary hardship or uninhabitable properties	Support is strongest where circumstances are outside the customer's control.
Need for controls and verification	- Assistance should be assessed carefully - Calls for means testing or case-by-case review - Avoid misuse of the system	There is an expectation of robust processes to ensure assistance is fair and credible.
Link to affordability pressures	- Some submitters noted high charges are the underlying issue - Assistance seen as addressing symptoms rather than causes	The need for assistance is linked to broader affordability concerns, not just policy design.

4. Implications for the draft Water Services Strategy

Feedback from the engagement highlights a clear pattern: while submitters support the need for safe and reliable water services, their support for the proposed strategy is conditional on how it is delivered, particularly in relation to affordability, fairness, transparency, and trust.

Six core themes emerge for consideration:

1. Affordability must be clearly demonstrated

Affordability is the dominant issue raised. Submitters want assurance that costs are being managed carefully, that increases are justified, and that impacts on households are clearly understood.

Implication: The Strategy should more clearly set out how affordability will be managed in practice, including how increases are phased and communicated.

2. Growth should fund growth

There is strong expectation that the costs of growth should not fall unfairly on existing residents. While this principle is included, confidence in how it is applied is low.

Implication: The Strategy should more clearly explain how growth-related costs are identified, allocated, and recovered.

3. Greater transparency and clarity is required

Many submitters expressed uncertainty about pricing, cost drivers, and future changes. There is a clear call for more accessible, customer-focused information.

Implication: The Strategy should improve how pricing, investment, and decision-making are explained, including clearer “what this means for customers” information.

4. Fairness and trust need to be strengthened

Feedback highlights concerns about equity across different customer groups, as well as broader trust in decision-making.

Implication: The Strategy should more clearly demonstrate how fairness is applied, and strengthen commitments to transparency, accountability, and ongoing communication.

5. A clear and targeted approach to hardship support is needed

Submitters generally support assistance for those in genuine hardship but emphasise that it must be targeted, fair, and transparently applied, with clear criteria and safeguards.

Implication: The Strategy should clarify how hardship support will operate, including providing clearer linkage between the Strategy and the Waivers and Remissions Policy, and ensure it is applied in a way that balances support for those in need with fairness for all customers.

6. Ongoing focus on water quality and customer confidence

Submitters raised concerns about aspects of water quality, including nitrates and chlorine, and expressed a desire for greater confidence in the safety and acceptability of drinking water. While regulatory compliance is understood, there is interest in how water quality outcomes may evolve over time.

Implication: The Strategy should strengthen how water quality is addressed, including clearly communicating current standards and performance, and commit to investigating future options to respond to community expectations and improve customer confidence.

Overall conclusion

The feedback does not suggest a need to change the strategic direction. Rather, it highlights the need to strengthen how the Strategy is articulated and delivered, particularly in relation to affordability, fairness, transparency, and confidence in decision-making.

It is also noted that this is a 12-month Strategy, developed during an establishment phase with a number of assumptions and work programmes still in progress. Submitter feedback reinforces the importance of using this period to refine key areas, including pricing, cost allocation, and communication, and to ensure that future iterations of the Strategy are supported by improved data, clearer frameworks, and stronger community confidence.

5. Alignment with Statement of Expectations

This section aligns key themes from community feedback with the expectations set out in the Statement of Expectations (SOE), to support the Board's understanding of how the draft Strategy responds to those expectations.

Engagement feedback indicates strong alignment with the SOE's intended outcomes, including delivering services that are safe, reliable, financially sustainable, affordable, and transparent.

The key opportunity identified through feedback is to more clearly demonstrate how these expectations are delivered in practice.

5.1 Alignment between community feedback and SOE expectations

SOE expectation	What submitters told us	Implication for the Strategy
Affordability is a key focus for all decision-making	Strong concern about rising costs, affordability pressures, and cumulative impacts on households	Strengthen the affordability approach, including how increases are managed, phased, and clearly communicated
Alignment with growth planning and infrastructure delivery	Strong expectation that growth should not increase costs for existing residents	Clearly demonstrate how growth-related costs are identified, allocated, and recovered
Transparency, accountability, and	Uncertainty about pricing, cost drivers, and future changes, and a clear request for more	Improve clarity of pricing and costs, strengthen public reporting, and provide

SOE expectation	What submitters told us	Implication for the Strategy
effective community engagement	accessible, customer-focused information	clear “what this means for customers” information
Acting in the best interests of current and future consumers	Concerns about fairness between customer groups and paying for services not received, alongside developing trust in decision-making Support for assistance for those in genuine hardship, with an expectation it is targeted, fair, and transparent	More clearly demonstrate how fairness is applied in pricing and cost allocation, and strengthen transparency and accountability to build confidence Clarify the approach to hardship support, ensuring it is targeted, transparent, and applied in a way that balances support with fairness for all customers
Resilient, safe, and sustainable water services and environmental stewardship	Concerns regarding water quality (including nitrates and chlorine) and desire for greater confidence in drinking water safety and acceptability	Strengthen how water quality is addressed, including communicating current standards and performance, and committing to investigating future options to improve customer confidence
Financial sustainability and efficient delivery of services	Concerns about value for money, cost escalation, and organisational efficiency	Better demonstrate cost discipline, efficiency, and the justification for investment decisions

5.2 Overall Board insight

Overall, the feedback reinforces that the Strategy is directionally aligned with the Statement of Expectations. The key focus moving forward is on how this is delivered in practice.

In particular, the Board should note six consistent expectations from the community:

1. A clear and credible approach to managing affordability
2. Confidence that growth-related costs are allocated fairly
3. Greater transparency and clarity in how pricing and investment decisions are communicated
4. A strong and visible commitment to fairness across customer groups
5. A targeted and transparent approach to hardship support
6. Ongoing focus on water quality and maintaining customer confidence

These expectations are consistent across both written submissions and engagement and reflect a strong level of alignment with the outcomes sought by the Strategy.

As Selwyn Water progresses through its establishment phase, the next 12 months will be critical in strengthening the information, systems, and communication needed to address these areas, support robust decision-making, and build community confidence.