



Significance and Engagement Policy

Your guide to Selwyn Water's Significance and Engagement Policy

A step-by-step-process to how we assess decisions and engage our community.



Determining significance

Step 1: The assessment criteria

- Financial and economic impacts
- Impacts on public health and levels of service
- Mana whenua interests and impacts
- Environmental impacts
- Potential risks
- Public interest
- Impacts on our obligations
- Ability to reverse a decision
- Consistency with current approach

We evaluate these impacts together to help us determine the significance of a decision.

Step 2: The significance spectrum

- High**
Major changes to infrastructure, significant costs, or long-term community impacts.
- Medium**
Moderate financial impacts, noticeable changes to levels of service, deviations from existing plans.
- Low**
Little financial impacts, routine, operational or administrative decisions with little public interest.

Decisions are assessed across these levels to help guide significance and the appropriate approach to community engagement.



Choosing engagement

Step 3: Selecting engagement options

Inform
Providing information

Consult
Seeking feedback

Involve
Working together early on

Collaborate
Partnering for solutions

Step 4: Engagement channels

- Website updates
- Email updates
- Online surveys
- Social media
- Community events
- Radio
- Local newspapers and libraries

We will connect with the community in a number of ways.

Note: There are times when engagement may not be possible, such as in emergencies, for legal obligations or to protect public health.

1. Introduction

Selwyn Water is responsible for delivering drinking water and wastewater services across the Waikirikir Selwyn district. As part of this role, we need to make certain decisions on behalf of our communities.

This Significance and Engagement Policy sets out the processes we will use to determine when and how to engage with our communities as part of our decision-making. It also sets out how we will engage with mana whenua as a strategic partner and ensures that we comply with our obligations under the Local Government (Water Services) Act 2025 (the LGWSA). It aligns with the Statement of Shareholder Expectations issued by Selwyn District Council and has been developed having regard to the Council's own significance and engagement policy as well as Selwyn Water's obligations under other legislation including the Water Services Act 2021.

This policy only applies to the things that Selwyn Water is responsible for. This is the provision of drinking water and wastewater services. It does not apply to the things that the Council continues to be responsible for, such as stormwater, land drainage, district planning and the making of bylaws – these will continue to be subject to the Council's own Significance and Engagement Policy.

In short, this policy provides information about:

- How Selwyn Water decides if a decision is significant
- When people can expect to be informed or asked for feedback
- The different ways in which engagement may be carried out, depending on the level of impact

It ensures we have the right conversations with the right people before decisions are made.

The Board of Selwyn Water will review this policy every three years or as required.

As required by the LGWSA, the purposes of this policy are:

- (a) To enable Selwyn Water, the Council as our shareholder, and our consumers and communities to identify the degree of significance attached to particular issues, proposals, water services infrastructure, decisions and activities
- (b) To enable Selwyn Water to develop a flexible and locally appropriate approach to engagement, which recognises and accommodates the preferences and expectations of:
 - a. The Council as our shareholder
 - b. Selwyn Water's consumers
 - c. The Council's communities
 - d. Any particular communities specified in this policy
- (c) To provide clarity about:
 - a. How and when communities can expect to be engaged in decisions about different issues, water services infrastructure, or other matters
 - b. Whether engagement will be undertaken by Selwyn Water or the Council
 - c. How Selwyn Water will take account of consumer and community views on matters on which the Council has expressed a view
- (d) To inform Selwyn Water from the beginning of a decision-making process about:
 - a. The extent of any engagement that is expected before a particular decision is made
 - b. With whom the engagement occurs
 - c. The form or type of engagement required



2. How will Selwyn Water determine when a matter is significant?

Our approach to engagement is informed by the significance of the decision we are making. Significance in this context refers to how important the decision is and the potential impact it may have.

In this section, we set out the process and criteria we will use to determine how significant a decision is. We also set out the additional criteria and processes we need to follow when considering certain decisions as required by the relevant legislation.

A. General process for determining significance

In order to determine the significance of a decision, Selwyn Water will use the general approach set out below:

Approach to determining significance

1. Identify relevant criteria

Selwyn Water will consider which of the criteria set out below apply to the relevant decision, and whether there are any further criteria we should consider. Note: there are specific additional criteria which must be considered when determining whether a contract is a significant contract. These are discussed later in this policy.

2. Assess against relevant criteria

We will then consider what each of those criteria suggest about the significance of the decision.

3. Locate decision on spectrum of significance

Based on our assessment of each of the relevant criteria, we will then assess where the decision falls on a spectrum from low to high significance. Where the decision is in relation to a contract or joint water service provider arrangement, we will also determine whether that contract or joint water service provider arrangement is 'significant' or not, based on its position on the spectrum (noting that we expect most decisions regarding joint water service provider arrangements would be significant).

4. Engage

Based on our assessment of the decision's significance, we will then determine our engagement strategy.

B. Criteria for determining significance

In assessing the significance of a decision, Selwyn Water will look to understand and anticipate the potential impacts of that decision on its communities, including in terms of financial, health, environmental, and service-level impacts.

A decision may be significant even where its impacts are concentrated on a specific community, geographic area, or group, particularly where those impacts are material.

Decisions with major impacts, whether district-wide or localised, will generally be treated as significant.

To assist us in determining whether a decision is significant, we will consider the following criteria.

Criteria for determining significance

Criterion	Explanation
Financial and economic impacts	These include financial impacts on consumers as well as on Selwyn Water. Decisions which reallocate funds within approved budgets and which do not affect consumer charges are more likely to be of low significance. Decisions which affect Selwyn Water's financial sustainability or which require significant increases in charges beyond those previously forecast or which have been the subject of previous engagement are more likely to be of high significance.
Impacts on public health and levels of service	Public health and the level of service we provide are key considerations for Selwyn Water. In considering this criterion, we will determine how many people are likely to be impacted and the extent of that impact. Routine decisions with no impact on public health or levels of service are more likely to be of low significance. Changes which may impact public health, or materially affect levels of service, are more likely to be of high significance.
Mana whenua interests and impacts	Recognising its partnership commitments, where a decision may affect mana whenua relationships with land, water, or other taonga, Selwyn Water will engage early with mana whenua to understand potential impacts and appropriate engagement. Guided by engagement with mana whenua, where a decision is assessed as having limited or no cultural impact, it is more likely to be of low significance. Decisions with the potential for material cultural impact are more likely to be of high significance.

Impact on the environment	In making decisions around water infrastructure and its effect on freshwater, Selwyn Water will consider the potential impacts on the environment. Decisions which have limited environmental impacts on a small area are more likely to be of low significance. Decisions which have major environmental impacts on a wide area are more likely to be of high significance. Decisions which have a major environmental impact on a small area may also be significant.
Potential risks	Selwyn Water will also consider the potential risks to: – Individuals – Communities – Selwyn Water – The Council as its shareholder In considering risks, we will consider their nature, the probability of the risk being realised and the extent of the potential impact. Decisions which pose small risks of causing limited harm are more likely to be of low significance. Decisions which generate risks which could have a significant impact on a large number of people if they eventuate are more likely to be of high significance.
Public interest	Selwyn Water will also consider the degree to which the public is likely to be affected by and/or interested in the particular decision. In particular, we will consider: – The number of people affected or with an interest in the matter – The nature and extent of that impact or interest – Whether the issue is expected to be contentious Decisions in which the public have expressed, or are expected to have, little interest, and/or which are not controversial, are more likely to be of low significance. Decisions which have a major impact on the wellbeing of large groups of people or are expected to generate significant public interest or be highly controversial, are more likely to be of high significance.
Impact on Selwyn Water's obligations	Selwyn Water has various obligations under the LGWSA and to the Council as our shareholder. We will consider the extent to which any decision will, or has the potential to, impact its performance of those obligations. Decisions which have little to no impact on our obligations are more likely to be of low significance. However, as noted in Section 6 below, where Selwyn Water is required to adopt a particular course of action because of one or more of its obligations, this may also reduce the need or ability to engage on that decision. In such cases, Selwyn Water will still consider how best to inform the community about the decision.

Ability to reverse decision	Circumstances can change over time and the greater flexibility Selwyn Water has, the better able we will be to address unforeseen scenarios. Selwyn Water will therefore consider the extent to which any decision may lock it into a particular course of action. Decisions which are readily reversible are more likely to be of low significance. Decisions which cannot be reversed are more likely to be of high significance.
Consistency with current approach	Selwyn Water will also consider whether a decision simply gives effect to policies which have previously been determined and/or whether it is consistent with the current approach. Decisions which maintain Selwyn Water's existing approach are more likely to be of low significance. Decisions which represent a major departure from that existing approach are more likely to be of high significance.
Any other key factors	Particular decisions may raise specific considerations. Selwyn Water will therefore assess whether there are any other factors it should consider as part of determining the significance of a particular decision.

For decisions assessed as medium or high significance, we will prepare a brief written significance assessment outlining the criteria considered, the resulting significance rating, and the proposed engagement approach. This assessment will inform any public engagement or reporting undertaken in relation to the decision.

Internal processes

We will use a standard assessment framework template to ensure that each of the significance criteria is actively considered for every decision, including where a criterion is determined to be not relevant in a particular case.

While medium and high significance decisions will generally be subject to engagement, we recognise the importance of appropriate transparency around significance determinations, including where a decision is assessed as low significance. Transparency for low significance decisions will be provided through existing reporting, summaries, or governance processes, taking into account the nature and impact of the decision.

Where significance decisions are reviewed or endorsed by the Board, the decision and the reasons for it will generally be made publicly available through Board reports, minutes, or other published material.

C. Locating the decision on a spectrum of significance

Having identified the criteria relevant to a particular matter, and considered what each suggests about whether a decision is of low or high significance, we will look at the impact of the decision as a whole to determine where it falls on the spectrum of significance below.

In doing so, we will consider both:

- The number of criteria which suggest that the decision is of higher significance. If three or more criteria suggest higher significance, then the decision is likely to be of high significance
- Each criterion individually – for example, a decision may be of high significance if there is a major public health or financial impact, even if the remaining criteria suggest that it should be of low significance

Spectrum of significance

Significance		
Low	Medium	High
Likely to include decisions which: – Have limited financial or no impacts – May result in no or minimal change to levels of service – Are consistent with existing policies, plans or standards – Are routine, operational or administrative in nature – Are of little public interest	Likely to include decisions which: – Have moderate financial impacts – May result in noticeable but not substantial changes to levels of service – May deviate from existing policies and plans in material but not substantial ways – Are expected to be of interest only to limited groups	Likely to include decisions which: – Have significant financial impacts – May result in major changes to levels of service or infrastructure – Represent a substantial departure from existing policies, plans or standards – Are of significant public interest – May have lasting impacts on communities, the environment or taonga

Where a decision falls on the spectrum above will then inform our approach to engagement on that issue.

The following types of decisions are generally expected to be high significance:

- Material changes to charges or affordability (e.g. large increases outside of those previously forecasted, new charging structures, or costs that significantly affect households)
- Significant changes to levels of service (e.g. reduced service standards, major operational changes)
- Strategic asset transfers or control changes (e.g. selling, leasing, or transferring control of major water infrastructure)
- Significant contracts or outsourcing arrangements (e.g. large contracts of high value relative to the revenue Selwyn Water receives, long-term operations contracts, contracts involving anything essential to Selwyn Water's ability to meet its obligations under the LGWSA, public-private partnerships)
- Long-term financial commitments or debt (e.g. significant borrowing for major capital commitments that affect future charges)

Where Selwyn Water considers a different significance rating is appropriate, the reasons for this will be clearly documented and explained.



D. Additional arrangements for certain decisions

The LGWSA sets out further requirements which apply to decisions on proposed contracts and proposed joint water service provider arrangements. The table below sets out how we will modify our general approach to determining significance when addressing these issues.

Modifications to the general approach to significance

Subject of decision	How we will modify our approach
Contracts	Under the LGWSA, Selwyn Water must consider the following criteria when determining whether a proposed contract is a significant contract: – Whether the proposed contract is of high value relative to the revenue that Selwyn Water receives from providing the water service to which the contract relates – Whether the proposed contract will create a public-private partnership – All matters that are essential to Selwyn Water's ability to meet its obligations under the LGWSA in relation to the water service to which the contract relates – Any relevant thresholds Selwyn Water will therefore consider these criteria in addition to the criteria for determining significance set out above. In addition, once we have located the decision we are making on the significance spectrum set out above, we will consider whether this means that the contract should be considered significant for the purposes of the LGWSA.
Joint water service provider arrangements	Once we have identified where on the significance spectrum our decision on a joint water service provider arrangement sits, we will consider whether this means that the joint water service provider arrangement should be considered significant for the purposes of the LGWSA. Selwyn Water notes that, at this time, we do not have any plans to enter into any significant joint water service provider arrangements. However, in order to comply with our obligations under the LGWSA, the requirements in relation to such arrangements are set out later in this policy.

Water services assets

When making decisions to transfer or receive ownership or control of a water services asset, we must consider whether the asset is a strategic water services asset. Under the LGWSA, a strategic water services asset is water services infrastructure, or another asset or group of assets, without which Selwyn Water is unable to:

- Meet its regulatory requirements
- Maintain its capacity to achieve the outcomes set out in its water services strategy

Appendix 1 to this policy (which will be added to as assets are identified) lists all strategic water services assets Selwyn Water has identified.

Proposed change to level of service

When making decisions in relation to changes to levels of service, we will follow the process set out in this policy, including locating that decision on the spectrum of significance. Having done so, we will then consider whether this means that the change to levels of service should be considered significant for the purposes of the LGWSA.



3. Engagement with mana whenua

We acknowledge the physical, cultural and spiritual significance of wai (water) and the relationship with Māori. We will ensure that our engagement with mana whenua, represented by Te Taumutu Rūnanga and Te Ngāi Tūāhuriri, is meaningful and upholds the mana and mauri of all water as set out in the Waiora One Water Strategy. We are committed to providing relevant information to inform mana whenua and Māori contribution and improve access to engagement and decision-making processes.

Our engagement approach will be guided by:

- Intergenerational thinking – decisions consider long-term impacts on water and communities
- Ki Uta Ki Tai – managing water holistically from mountains to sea
- Shared responsibility – working together to restore and protect water health

We are committed to working with mana whenua and to embedding these principles throughout our decision and engagement processes and to ensuring that partnership is at the heart of how we manage drinking and wastewater.

While recognising that mana whenua may not have an interest in every decision, we will work together to assess whether decisions have no, limited, or significant cultural impacts.

4. Engagement with Selwyn District Council

We will engage with the Council as part of our decision-making processes. The Council is our shareholder, and council members are the elected representatives of the Waikirikiri Selwyn community.

We will therefore engage with the Council on key decisions (such as around charging frameworks, significant capital programme changes and major service level changes), as well as where we are required to do so under the LGWSA and in line with the Statement of Shareholder Expectations. We will also ensure that the Council is kept informed of our decisions, particularly where these may interact with council activities.

In some cases, we may wish to engage with the wider community on decisions on which the Council has already provided us with a view. In such cases, we will consider how best to balance obtaining community views with those already given to us by the community's elected representatives. This may include limiting the options on which we engage based on the Council's feedback or otherwise noting the Council's views as part of our engagement materials.



5. Engagement with our communities

Engagement is an important part of how Selwyn Water will make decisions. In this section, we set out our general approach to deciding what forms of engagement we will use as part of our decision-making, including the factors we will consider and the forms of engagement available to us.

A. Overall approach

When we are considering our preferred approach to engagement, we will follow the general approach below:

- Consider if there are reasons why engagement may not be appropriate (as set out in section 6 of this policy)
- Consider the factors relevant to engagement as set out below
- Choose the most suitable engagement approach from the options outlined later in this policy
- Aim to identify that preferred approach as early as possible in the process so there is plenty of time to plan and carry out the engagement effectively

B. Factors relevant to determining engagement approach

The approach Selwyn Water takes to engagement will be determined on a case-by-case basis, in light of the particular decision being considered. As part of deciding on our approach, Selwyn Water may consider the following:

- How significant the decision is
- What we are trying to achieve through engagement – for example, are we primarily seeking to inform the community and share information or are we seeking feedback to help shape a decision
- The extent to which we have already sought, and obtained, feedback on related issues and the extent to which we are comfortable that we already understand relevant community perspectives
- The level of desire and capacity amongst relevant groups and individuals to provide feedback on the decision
- The wider public interest in a decision
- The benefits, costs and limitations of undertaking engagement and of different engagement options
- Timing considerations, including any other engagement happening at the same time (whether by Selwyn Water or otherwise) with similar communities
- Community preferences, as outlined below

For decisions assessed as medium significance, we will, at a minimum, consult by informing the community about the proposed decision and providing an opportunity for feedback before the decision is made. The scale and form of engagement will be proportionate to the nature and impact of the decision.

For decisions assessed as high significance, we will, at a minimum, consult the community by publishing an engagement document that explains the proposed decision and how the community can participate. Selwyn Water will actively seek community feedback and will report back on the feedback received, explaining how that feedback informed the final decision.



Where statutory requirements or urgent circumstances prevent engagement in advance, Selwyn Water will publish the reasons for its approach and provide information to the community as soon as reasonably practicable.

We are also required to consult on certain matters, including significant contracts and significant changes to proposed services levels, as set out in more detail later in this policy.

C. Community preferences on engagement

When considering engagement on a decision, Selwyn Water will consider any preferences expressed by relevant communities as to whether and how we engage on such decisions. This includes any preferences expressed as part of:

- Engagement on this Significance and Engagement policy
- Engagement on similar previous decisions
- Selwyn Water’s other interactions with relevant groups

We may adapt its engagement approach to address these preferences, subject to its consideration of other factors outlined in this policy.

D. Options for engagement

As with significance, options for engagement fall along a spectrum. When considering engagement on a decision, we will consider where along this spectrum its engagement should fall.

Spectrum of engagement options

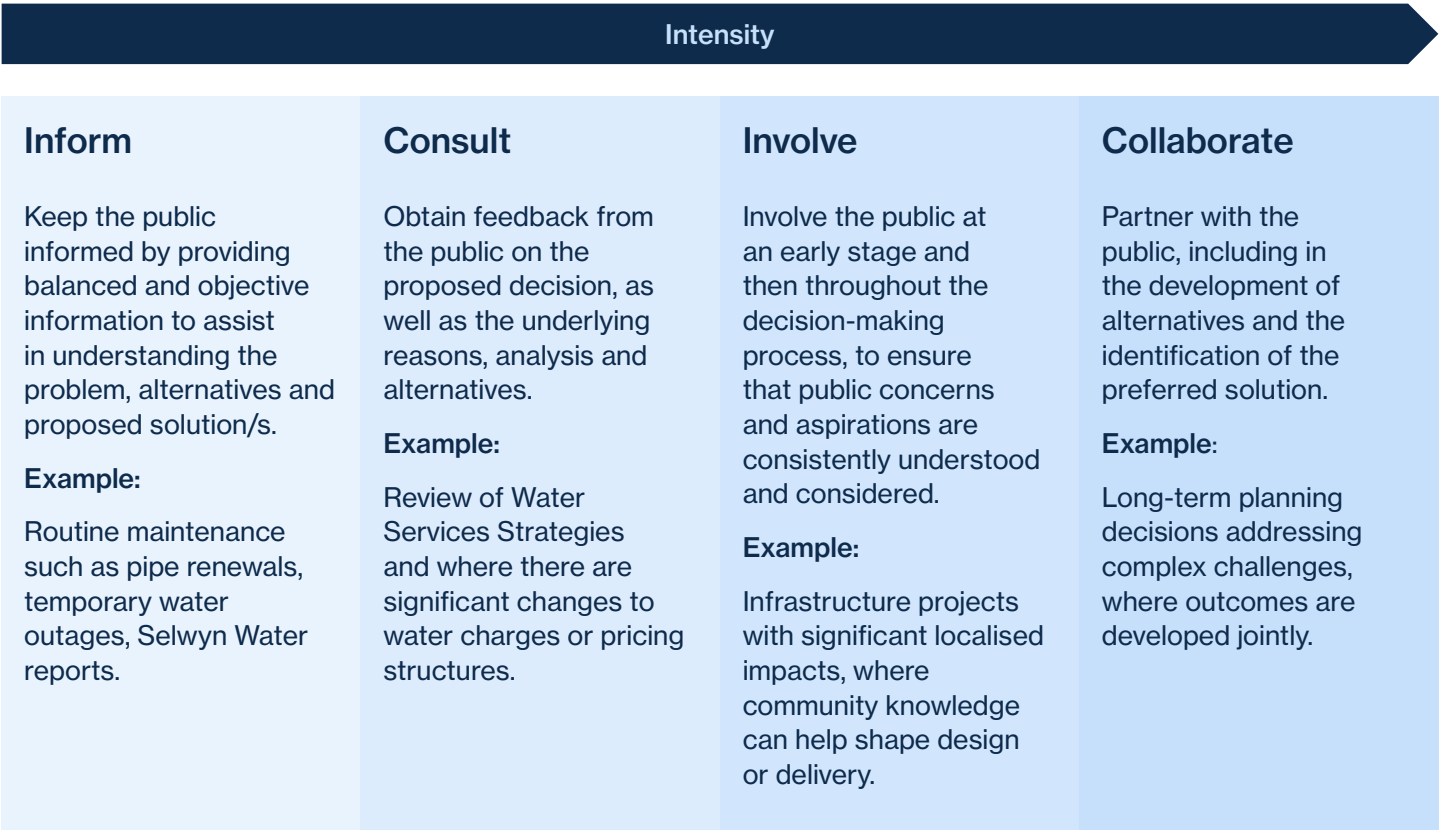


Diagram adapted from IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

Depending on the decision, Selwyn Water may adopt different approaches at different stages throughout a project or decision-making process.

Channels that Selwyn Water may use to implement its preferred engagement option include:

Channels for engagement

- Announcements on our website
- Local radio
- Advertisements in local newspapers
- Digital advertising
- Email newsletters
- Directly mailing information material
- Public events, such as drop-in sessions and facilitated events
- Focused engagement sessions with particular stakeholders e.g. mana whenua, community groups and associations
- Engagement platforms operating through Selwyn Water's website
- Email
- Social media
- Collateral in public spaces, such as information in public libraries and community rooms

Selwyn Water will also use appropriate local engagement channels where relevant, including local community boards, residents' and community associations, community meetings, and targeted engagement with affected communities, particularly where impacts are geographically concentrated. Selwyn Water remains open to hearing from the public and community groups regarding their preferences as to engagement options or any other engagement options Selwyn Water should consider utilising in future.

E. Specific arrangements for significant contracts, significant joint water service provider arrangements, strategic water services assets and significant proposed changes to service levels

The LGWSA requires a specific approach to engagement when certain decisions are considered to be significant. Specifically, these arrangements apply to decisions in relation to:

- Significant contracts
- Significant joint water service provider arrangements
- Transferring or receiving ownership or control of strategic water services assets
- Significant proposed changes to levels of service

Decisions on these issues are likely to be relatively rare. However, we set out the process we are required to follow in such cases below.

First, we will engage with the Council over who will conduct engagement relating to the proposal. If the Council wants Selwyn Water to be responsible for this, we will follow the process set out below.

Step	Additional detail
1. Identify and assess options	We will identify and assess the range of options for achieving the objectives of the proposal, including continuing with the existing approach to providing water services, the proposal, and at least one further reasonably practicable option (assuming one is available).
2. Make available information	We will make available the information we are required to provide under section 32 of the LGWSA, including the change proposal, assessment of options, how the proposal (and status quo) are likely to affect charges, and the implications of the proposal for communities in our district.
3. Consult with mana whenua	Where any of the options identified involve a significant decision in relation to land or a body of water, we will take into account the relationship of Māori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral land, water, sites, wāhi tapu, valued flora and fauna and other taonga. We will undertake consultation as set out in Section 3 of this policy.
4. Undertake consultation	We will undertake consultation on our preferred option. As part of this consultation, anyone who will or may be affected by, or have an interest in, the proposal will have an opportunity to share their views with us.
5. Consult on any significant amendments	If our consultation results in an amendment to our proposal, we will consider whether it is a significant amendment. We will determine this in light of: – The extent to which we already know the views and preferences of those affected – The nature and significance of the change proposal – The criteria for determining significance set out in Section 2 of this policy If we consider that the amendment is a significant amendment to our proposal, we will consult further on that amended proposal.
6. Consult with the Council	We will consult with the Council to obtain its approval for our final decision.

6. Circumstances in which Selwyn Water may not engage

While we consider engagement to be important, there are times where it may not be possible or appropriate for Selwyn Water to engage on a particular decision. Such circumstances include where the decision:

- Is routine or operational
- Is an organisational matter (e.g. decisions involving our staff)
- Must be made urgently and/or in an emergency situation
- Is required to comply with Selwyn Water's legal obligations
- Is necessary to protect life or health, or to prevent serious property damage
- Is necessary to avoid, remedy or mitigate an adverse effect on the environment
- Is necessary to protect the integrity of infrastructure
- Is commercially sensitive
- Is in relation to water charges to an individual or small group of individuals (for example, decisions as to the application of Selwyn Water's waiver policy to individual consumers)

These circumstances do not remove Selwyn Water's commitment to transparency.

Where engagement is not undertaken, we will still consider how best to inform the community about the decision, unless legally prohibited.

Where a decision is made urgently or in an emergency, meaning that engagement cannot be undertaken in advance, we will inform the community of the decision, the reasons for it, and any implications for customers as soon as practicable after the decision is made.

We will maintain oversight of how engagement exceptions are applied. The use of engagement exceptions will be periodically reported to the Board, including the types of circumstances in which exceptions have been relied upon. Where appropriate, this information will be included in public Board reporting.

Nothing in this section overrides Selwyn Water's obligation to engage where it is required to do so under the LGWSA.



Appendix 1: List of strategic water services assets

The following identifies strategic water services assets for the purposes of this policy and is limited to Selwyn Water's transferred drinking water and wastewater assets.

This appendix is intended to operate as a high-level schedule and will be refined over time as Selwyn Water further identifies and documents its strategic water services assets.

1. Water supplies including reservoirs, pump stations and reticulation
2. Wastewater collection, treatment and disposal systems including the pipes, pump stations, treatment and land for disposal

