

Tiaki Wai Significance and Engagement Policy for 2026/27

Approved by Board

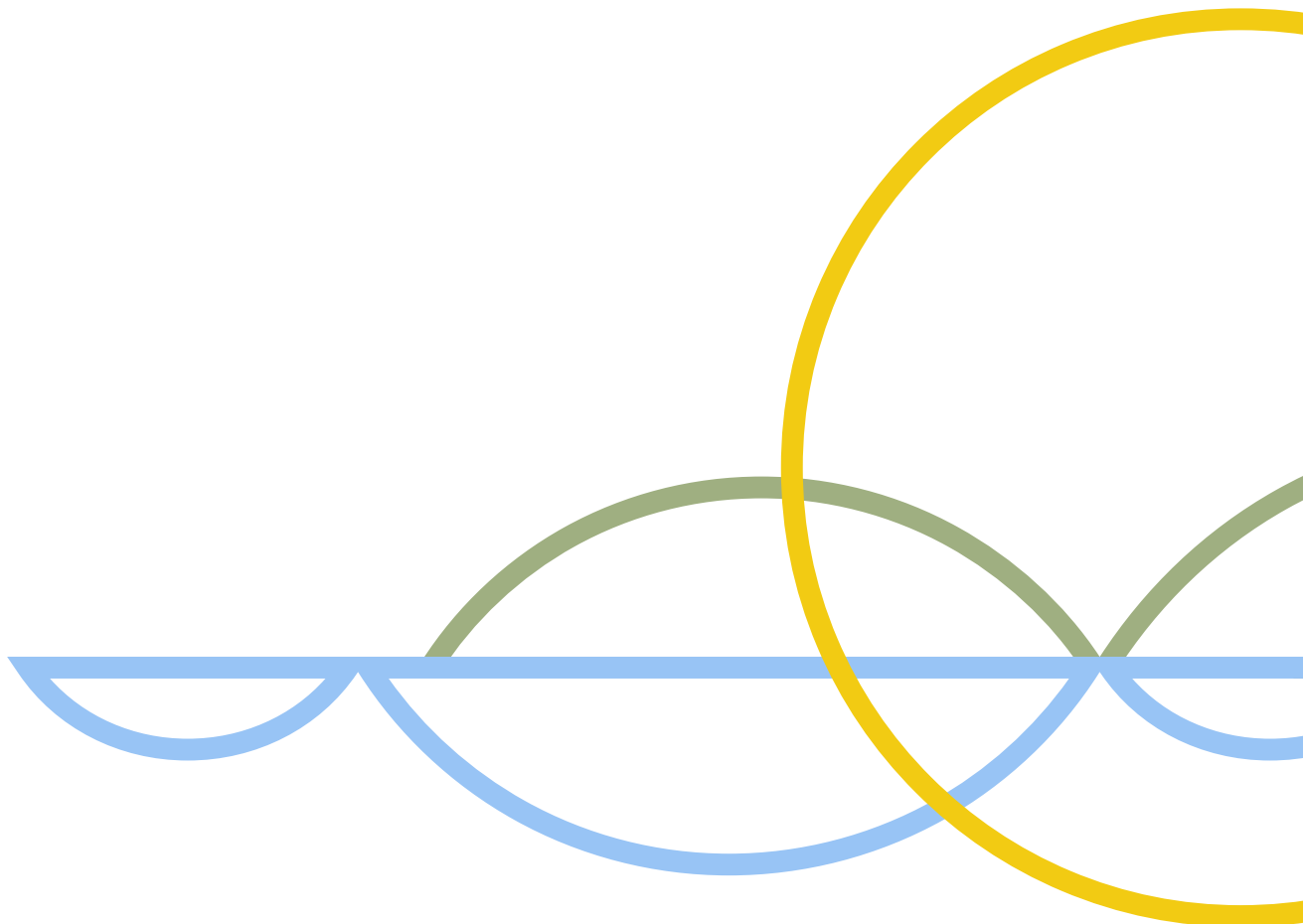
11 June 2026

Scheduled review date

This policy will apply to decisions made during the 2026/27 financial year.

Tiaki Wai intends to review this policy and make any amendments prior to 30 June 2027.

This review will occur alongside the development of the next Water Services Strategy for Tiaki Wai, which will apply to the 2027-37 period.



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1 About Tiaki Wai

Tiaki Wai is a council-owned water organisation that, from 1 July 2026, will deliver drinking water, wastewater and piped stormwater services across the metropolitan Wellington area.

Tiaki Wai was established by five shareholding councils – Wellington City, Hutt City, Upper Hutt City, Porirua City, and Greater Wellington Regional Council – and two mana whenua partners, Ngāti Toa Rangatira and Taranaki Whānui ki Te Upoko o Te Ika.

Tiaki Wai recognises that it is managing and delivering water services on behalf of, and for, the communities across the metropolitan Wellington area, and that it needs to engage meaningfully with those who are likely to be affected by decisions made by Tiaki Wai.

2 About this Policy

The Local Government (Water Services) Act 2025 (LGWSA) requires Tiaki Wai to adopt a significance and engagement policy. The purpose of the policy is to guide the approach Tiaki Wai takes to engagement and provide clarity about when communities can expect to be engaged in relation to decisions by Tiaki Wai. It is also required to include content that relates to significant contracts and the water services strategy, in particular whether and how consultation is required to be undertaken for certain proposed contracts or types of decisions.

Tiaki Wai will be required to make a range of decisions in relation to water services throughout the year, including decisions about: the level of service customers receive, where and when essential infrastructure is renewed or built, the investment required in water infrastructure and assets, how that investment is financed (including through water charges), and the contracts that will be entered into to deliver services and infrastructure projects.

Many strategic decisions will be made and documented through the Water Services Strategy and Water Services Annual Budget, but there is also the potential for other decisions to be made throughout the year. This could include decisions about significant contracts, potential joint water service provider arrangements, and other significant proposals or projects.

The decisions Tiaki Wai makes will affect residents, businesses and communities in different ways. It is important that people who are likely to be affected by decisions are informed and that they have the opportunity to provide their views when necessary.

3 Purpose of this Policy

This policy:

- sets out how Tiaki Wai will determine the significance (importance) of particular proposals, issues, infrastructure, decisions and activities
- identifies criteria and matters that will generally be used when assessing the significance of proposals
- outlines how and when communities can expect to be engaged, and by who, and what Tiaki Wai will do with feedback and views provided through engagement.

Any engagement or consultation about decisions, proposals, significant contracts and joint water service provider arrangements Tiaki Wai intends to make will generally be conducted by Tiaki Wai. The only other parties that may consult on behalf of Tiaki Wai, where there is good reason for doing so, are: Hutt City Council, Porirua City Council, Wellington City Council, Upper Hutt City Council and Greater Wellington Regional Council.

There may be situations where joint consultation with one of the shareholding councils is appropriate, for example, in relation to development contributions. This will be managed in line with this significance and engagement policy and the relevant council's significance and engagement policy, to ensure that all relevant requirements are met.

4 Engagement Principles

Clarity	Tiaki Wai will provide clear information about the proposed decision, the purpose of consultation (including the feedback desired), and the timing of consultation and the eventual Tiaki Wai decision.
Accessibility	Tiaki Wai will provide access to all relevant information in a form people in the community can understand. This means we need to engage in ways that show we understand the make-up of our communities, respecting cultural and individual differences.
Opportunity	Tiaki Wai will provide clear feedback forms and accept feedback online and in writing but will also accept feedback from the community in other ways, where practical and where that will work better for any communities or individuals.
Identifying key or interested stakeholders	Before consulting, Tiaki Wai will work to identify the key or most interested stakeholders in relation to a proposal and invite feedback from those stakeholders. This will include mana whenua, for any proposals or decisions of relevance to Māori interests.
Open-mindedness and fairness	Tiaki Wai will receive feedback from the community with an open mind and give due consideration to those views when making decisions.
Transparency	Where it can, Tiaki Wai will publish a clear record of decisions made and details of how it considered the community feedback it received.
Coordination	Where required, Tiaki Wai will coordinate with Shareholding Councils when planning engagement and consultation to ensure consistency in approach and minimise confusion and costs.

5 Approach to Decision Making

For all decisions, Tiaki Wai will adopt the following approach:

1. determine the significance of the proposal/decision using the criteria in **Schedule 1: Determining Significance**, and **Schedule 2: Significant Assets** and then
2. based on that determination, decide whether any engagement is required for the proposal/decision; and
3. if engagement is considered appropriate, develop an engagement plan in a manner that aligns with the guidance in **Schedule 3: Engagement Planning**.

Specific additional considerations apply to the following matters or types of decisions, as set out below:

- Water Services Strategy.
- Significant Tiaki Wai decisions on projects or proposals.
- Decisions relating to joint water service provider arrangements.
- Decisions about significant contracts.

5.1 Water Services Strategy

The Water Services Strategy is the key strategic planning document developed by Tiaki Wai, which sets out the short, medium and long term direction for Tiaki Wai. It includes infrastructure investment plans, proposed levels of service, performance measures, proposed water charges, and financial forecasting.

Tiaki Wai will generally consult with the community in relation to its proposed Water Services Strategy by:

- developing a draft Water Services Strategy and making this available to the public. This will be communicated across multiple channels, including the Tiaki Wai website, social media, news media and advertising
- inviting feedback on the draft Water Services Strategy through the use of feedback forms, available both on-line and in hard copy
- allowing feedback from the community over a period of generally no less than three weeks; and
- publishing insights received from community feedback at the time of publishing its final Water Services Strategy and decisions.

When consulting the community on its draft Water Services Strategy, Tiaki Wai will specifically seek community feedback on:

- any proposal to transfer ownership or control of a strategic water services asset from Tiaki Wai to another party

- any proposal to transfer ownership or control of a strategic water services asset to Tiaki Wai from another party; and/ or
- any proposal to significantly change levels of service provided by Tiaki Wai.

Schedule 1 provides a definition of a significant change in level of service and **Schedule 2** provides definitions of what is considered a strategic water services asset.

5.2 Significant Tiaki Wai decisions on projects or proposals

Tiaki Wai will generally undertake consultation / engagement for new significant projects or proposals, in particular when they have not been consulted on through the Water Services Strategy process. Where existing planned significant projects or proposals are proposed to be amended, Tiaki Wai will determine whether consultation is warranted based on the significance of the proposed amendments.

5.3 Decisions relating to joint water service provider arrangements

If Tiaki Wai was to consider the delivery of water services through a joint water services arrangement, outside of the Tiaki Wai service delivery area, then it would consider whether engagement is warranted in line with this policy.

5.4 Decisions on significant contracts

Tiaki Wai is required to determine whether any proposed contracts are significant, based on this policy. If a contract is assessed as significant, then Tiaki Wai must undertake engagement, including with its shareholders, before entering into the proposed contract. Following that consultation, Tiaki Wai must also obtain its shareholder's approval to enter the proposed contract, as required by section 23 of the Local Government (Water Services) Act 2025.

For proposed contracts to be considered significant, the following additional criteria apply in addition to the criteria in Schedule 1:

- Contracts that would create a public-private partnership as defined by the Crown ([National Infrastructure Funding and Financing](#)).
- Contracts that could risk the ability of Tiaki Wai to meet its statutory obligations.
- Contracts that have a value of greater than 20% of total annual revenue.

Where one or more of the above criteria are met, the contract will likely be considered significant, with some form of consultation required.

However, Tiaki Wai will not usually consult on significant contracts when:

- the matter, proposal or project that the proposed contract relates to has already been consulted on and approved by Tiaki Wai, i.e. through the Water Services Strategy, and
- the scale or outcome of the matter, proposal or project the proposed contract will cover has not substantively changed from what has previously been consulted on.

In those instances, Tiaki Wai will instead inform the community that the contract has been awarded, and the key terms of that contract.

Where a proposed significant contract relates to a matter, proposal or project that has not already been consulted on, then Tiaki Wai will consult on the proposed contract in line with **Schedule 3**.

Any consultation on a significant contract would not include any matters that could impact on the ability of Tiaki Wai to conduct a competitive commercial tender process.

Schedule 1: Determining significance

In relation to this policy, the term “significance” means the relative importance of the decision or proposal being considered. When assessing significance, Tiaki Wai will consider a number of criteria. These will be considered from the perspective of the entire service area covered by Tiaki Wai, while also taking into account local interests and impacts, recognising that Tiaki Wai decisions will not be relevant, or impact, the entire service area in all cases.

While a decision or proposal will be assessed against each criterion separately, Tiaki Wai will make a decision on the overall level of significance before determining whether, and what form, of engagement may be required.

The criteria used to assess significance are:

Criteria	High significance	Medium significance	Low or no significance
<p>Consistency with existing policy, decision or contract</p> <p><i>The extent to which a decision is consistent with, or a departure from, existing policy, decisions or contracts made by or entered into by Tiaki Wai.</i></p>	<p>Decision is inconsistent or contrary to existing policy or plans made in the Water Services Strategy, prior decisions made by Tiaki Wai, or amounts to a material change to an existing contract entered into by Tiaki Wai.</p> <p>Decision will result in a significant change in outcomes (or scale of outcomes for a project) being delivered.</p>	<p>Decision involves some variation from existing policy or plans but will not result in a material change to the overall outcomes being delivered.</p>	<p>Decision aligns with existing policy or decisions or is a reasonable consequence of Water Services Strategy or previous decisions.</p>

Criteria	High significance	Medium significance	Low or no significance
<p>Impact on Mana Whenua interests</p> <p><i>The extent to which a decision relates to land or a body of water, takes into account the relationship of Māori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral land, water, sites, waahi tapu, valued flora and fauna, and other taoka.</i></p>	Decision has a significant impact on te mana o te wai (the health and wellbeing of the water), freshwater quality, or could impact on a site / area of significance to mana whenua.	Decision may relate to te mana o te wai (the health and wellbeing of the water), freshwater quality, or land of interest to Mana Whenua, but will not lead to any adverse effects or cultural consequences.	Decision relates to projects, assets or plans with no link to matters of specific interest to mana whenua.
<p>Community interest</p> <p><i>The extent to which existing individuals, organisations, groups and sectors in the community are affected by the Tiaki Wai decision.</i></p>	High level of interest likely across the entire Tiaki Wai service area.	High level of interest for a particular location or community, but low to moderate interest elsewhere.	Low level of interest, either at a wider service area or local frame of reference, or only likely to impact a small group (e.g. single street or household).
<p>Level of service provided</p>	Large, permanent change to level of service from that outlined in Water Services Strategy.	Moderate effect or temporary impact on level of service outlined in Water Services Strategy.	Decision has little effect on levels of service, or resourcing requirements.
<p>Transfer of ownership or control of strategic assets (see definitions of strategic assets below)</p>	Note: Mandatory consultation required under section 28, Local Government (Water Services) Act 2025.		
<p>Ability for decision to be reversed</p>	Very difficult to reverse. (e.g. project already under contract)	Moderately difficult.	Easy to reverse. (e.g. policy amendment)

Criteria	High significance	Medium significance	Low or no significance
Financial impact on for water charges	Decision causes an uplift in annual water charges >5% above projections.	NA	NA

Schedule 2: Strategic assets

A strategic asset is an asset that is needed to deliver on the strategic outcomes and priorities that are important to the current or future performance of Tiaki Wai.

Tiaki Wai considers the following assets, in their entirety, to be strategic assets:

- The drinking water network, including pump stations and reservoirs.
- Drinking water treatment plants.
- The wastewater network, including pump stations.
- Wastewater treatment plants.
- Piped stormwater network, including pump stations.
- Resource consents for water takes and discharges.

Although Tiaki Wai owns and manages a number of assets as a single group (i.e., the drinking water network), and considers it to be strategic asset, not all decisions made about a group of assets will be regarded as significant, nor do they affect the asset's strategic nature.

For example, the drinking water network is a strategic asset, but individual water meters measuring volumes of drinking water are not considered strategic assets themselves. As another example, the wastewater network is strategic, but small parcels of land related to that network may not be, and the purchase or sale of such parcels of land are unlikely to amount to a significant decision. It is only where separate decisions could materially impact on the ability to deliver across the whole network that they will generally be significant decisions.

Schedule 3: Engagement

In general, the higher the significance of a proposal or decision, the more likely there will be a need for some form of community engagement. The principles set out above will inform the approach Tiaki Wai takes to engagement.

Forms of engagement

The engagement methods used will reflect the level of significance and respond to the diverse needs and requirements of communities. There is a level of judgement required when deciding on the level of engagement, as reflected in the table below. For example, a decision may be of medium significance when considered across the whole service area, but high significance for a particular community (for example a new reservoir). This would suggest 'consult' with the local community but 'inform' for the wider region.

Identifying stakeholders and audiences

When appropriate, Tiaki Wai will use different levels of engagement for different audiences depending on the level of interest in, or the potential impact of the decision or proposal. Where we are targeting specific communities or groups of stakeholders, rather than the whole region, we will make this clear in consultation materials.

We will identify stakeholders by considering those who live, work and/or recreate in affected areas, and the level of impact of the decision or proposal on them. We will draw on our existing knowledge and understanding of communities, as well as proactively working with community representatives to identify additional stakeholders.

The following table provides examples of different levels of engagement that may be appropriate, and the tools that may be used by Tiaki Wai.

Level of engagement	Involve /collaborate	Consult	Inform
Significance level (refer to Schedule 1)	High significance decisions	Water Services Strategy and medium to high significance decisions	Low to medium significance decisions
What does this level of engagement involve?	Participatory process to help the public identify issues and views to ensure concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered when making decisions.	Two-way communication where Tiaki Wai provides information and supporting analysis and seeks public feedback to inform decision-making.	Tiaki Wai provides balanced and objective information to help the public understand the issue requiring a decision, the alternatives, opportunities and solutions. Tiaki Wai regulatory reports on decisions made, and implementation of those decisions.
Types of issues we might use this level of engagement for	Major projects that involve environmental, cultural, economic concerns, including material amendments or changes to existing major projects.	Proposed (draft) Water Services Strategy (other than for major projects); major infrastructure projects that impact communities for extended periods. Significant contracts not otherwise consulted on through the proposed (draft) Water Services Strategy.	Local water restrictions, works that will disrupt traffic/ access, night works, general operational decisions, small or temporary level of service change.

Level of engagement	Involve /collaborate	Consult	Inform
Tools Tiaki Wai might use for this level of engagement	Online information. Face to face engagement (e.g. targeted meetings, community stakeholder forums, public workshops, focus groups).	Formal submissions through an online process.	Direct delivery e.g. information fliers/ letters, public notices in newspapers/ social media/ newsletters/via council channels. Website information.
When the community can expect to be involved for this level of engagement	Tiaki Wai will generally provide the community with opportunities to identify and discuss the merits of various options, prior to initiating consultation ahead of decision-making.	Formal consultation in advance of adopting policy documents or plans.	Usually after a decision is made, but in advance of the activity being undertaken.

Engagement decision making process

The following diagram illustrates the typical steps in the engagement decision making process.

