

Easements & your property: what you need to know

**YOU MUST
MAINTAIN
ACCESS TO
EASEMENTS**

An easement is created to ensure infrastructure such as water and sewer pipes can be repaired, upgraded or maintained.

Easements provide Western Water and/or local councils with legal permission to access specific areas of land for installing and maintaining pipes or other assets.

How do I know if I have an easement on my property?

If you have an easement on your property, it will be registered on your land title. It is likely to include Western Water owned assets, such as access shafts, manholes, water valves and water or sewer pipes.

What does an easement on my property mean for me?

If there is an easement on your land, you are required to ensure Western Water staff or contractors can access the easement at all times.

This means keeping the area clear of any obstructions, such as vegetation. Manholes need to be kept free of garden fillers, such as gravel, sand and soil.

What if I want to build or landscape over an easement?

Any construction, or placement of a structure, over or within one metre of an easement on your property requires written consent from Western Water before any work begins.

Contact us to request a Build Over Easement Application form.

Sheds, paths, driveways, edging and other landscaping are common improvements that are sometimes placed over easements.

In each case, the design of your garden and any improvements need to allow for possible ground subsidence. For example, a concrete path may crack if there is subsidence, so a pebble or mulch path is more practical. See overleaf for more on the effects of subsidence.

If you want to plant over an easement, make sure you don't plant trees or shrubs that have roots that may invade water and sewer pipes, causing blockages.

Always plant at least two metres from an easement. For more information about planting and easements, and a list of trees to avoid, see our *Tree Roots and Sewer Pipes* fact sheet.



Easements are needed to:

- Protect Western Water's pipes and other assets from damage
- Ensure access to our pipes for upgrades or maintenance
- Let property owners know there is underground infrastructure on their property and special conditions apply to the use of this part of their land.

The effects of subsidence.

Ground subsidence may occur gradually over many years, or it may occur rapidly after heavy rainfall. It may take several years and plenty of heavy rainfall before the ground settles completely.

It is difficult to judge exactly how much subsidence will occur after work has been done in an easement.

This depends on the width and depth of the trench, the type of soil and the weather conditions prior to and during construction. The key is to remember to allow for the likelihood of ground subsidence along easements.

Certain soil types, their consistency and weather conditions may actually encourage subsidence. For example, a heavy clay soil that is excavated in summer is more likely to subside than sandy soil excavated under similar conditions.

Once subsidence has happened, further subsidence may occur in the future.



To help ensure subsidence is minimised, Western Water contractors are required to adequately compact ground over works done in easements.

The level of soil compaction is tested afterwards to ensure it is adequate.

Compaction, however, does not guarantee that the ground will maintain its original level, or that there will be no subsidence. The

pressure needed to achieve this would risk damaging the pipeline underneath.

Techniques such as reinforcing and/or bridging design can be used to help reduce the risk of sinkage over an easement by allowing for ground settlement.

When work is done in an easement.

When Western Water staff or contractors need to install or access sewer or water pipes in an easement they will dig a trench.

When works are completed, soil is backfilled and compacted around the pipe. However, during the soil compaction process it is almost impossible to remove all the air pockets between the small lumps or clods of soil in the trench. When it rains, water enters these small air pockets between the clods and dissolves the soil, causing the air pockets to shrink.

This can result in visible subsidence on the surface. Subsidence is where areas of soil have settled to form hollows or potholes in the ground. .

If maintenance is required.

Except in the case of an emergency, Western Water will provide you with at least seven days notice if we need to do work in an easement on your property. If we need to enter your property for planned repairs or maintenance, we will give at least seven days notice.

Where we undertake any maintenance or repairs, Western Water is responsible for restoring the property involved to a state as near as possible to that which existed before we started. This usually happens two to three weeks later, to allow time for the ground to dry out.



DID YOU KNOW?

Western Water crews are on standby 24 hours a day in case water or sewer pipes need maintenance.