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TARGETED CAT DESEXING GRANTS

Program Guidelines



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1 Document authorisation details

Title	Targeted cat desexing program guidelines
Issuing Division/ Branch	Animal Welfare Victoria
Date Effective	22/12/2023
Enquiries Contact	Animal Welfare Victoria
Approved by	Minister for Agriculture

2 Glossary/definitions

Term	Definition
Targeted Cat Desexing (TCD) Program	Program targeting low socio-economic areas, areas with high cat nuisance and impoundment rates, semi-owners, and areas with high unowned and semi-owned cat populations.
Semi-owned cats	Cats that are fed or partly cared for by people who do not consider themselves as owners. These cats are not registered with council and usually not microchipped or desexed.
Unowned cats	Cats that are not directly fed by people or registered with council. These cats are indirectly dependent on people, with some having casual and temporary human interaction (e.g. feed from bins, human food scraps, etc).
Problem cat populations	Low socio-economic areas with either high unowned/semi-owned cat populations, impoundment rates or cat nuisance complaint rates
Animal Welfare Fund (AWF)	The Animal Welfare Fund is established under Part 7F of the <i>Domestic Animals Act 1994</i> and provides grant funding to eligible organisations.
Animal Welfare Victoria (AWV)	Dedicated public service group within DEECA that brings together aspects of domestic animal and animal welfare research, policy, legislation, education and compliance.
DA Act	<i>Domestic Animals Act 1994 (Vic)</i>
DEECA or department	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
Early Age Desexing	Cats can be desexed from 1kg, usually eight weeks of age. They should be desexed before 4 months, which is when cats can become pregnant.
Local Government Council	Local Government Councils within Victoria (of which there are 79) are eligible to apply for pet desexing grant funding. Local Government Councils within other state jurisdictions are ineligible to apply for grant funding.
Minister	Minister for Agriculture (or delegate)

3 Introduction

3.1 Overview of the Targeted Cat Desexing Program

Cat management is a challenging issue across Victoria. For many Victorians, cats are a beloved family pet. However, when cats roam, or are unowned, they pose a threat to our native wildlife. While there are approximately 227,000 registered cat owners in Victoria, there are many unowned and semi-owned cats roaming our streets that end up in shelters and pounds each year. This places a strain on council and community resources and can result in negative welfare outcomes for wildlife and the cats themselves.

Desexing cats before they can reproduce is essential to reduce the problems associated with cat overabundance.

Under the 2022-23 State Budget, the Victorian Government allocated funds to improve cat management outcomes across the state. \$300,000 in grant funding has been committed to support councils to deliver trial Targeted Cat Desexing (TCD) programs. Outcomes from these trial programs will be used to inform future policies, programs or activities on cat desexing, including the cat management strategy.

The TCD program aims to increase desexing rates of cats within council, reduce cat impoundment and euthanasia rates over the medium term (2-5 years), with a focus on low socio-economic areas and improving cat welfare and registration rates. Grant proposals will need to demonstrate a targeted approach to cat desexing by trying to identify 'hot spots' and problem cat populations. Programs should focus on areas that:

- contribute to high rates of cat impoundments and nuisance cat complaints
- have known populations of semi-owned cats being fed by residents; or
- low socio-economic areas within council where semi-owned and unowned cats are prevalent.

3.2 Program objectives and outcomes

The objectives of the TCD program are to:

- Target problem cat population areas that disproportionately contribute to high impoundment, euthanasia and nuisance complaint rates within council.
- Support local councils to provide free or low-cost desexing to residents in low socio-economic areas.
- Promote the benefits of early age (by 4 months) desexing of cats.
- Improve cat management and animal welfare outcomes for councils (e.g., decrease impoundment and euthanasia rates in the long-term and increase desexing and registration rates in the short-term).

The intended outcomes of the program are to:

- Reduce the number of semi-owned and unowned cats and kittens over the medium to long-term.
- Influence semi-owners to take full ownership for cats they feed (i.e. registration, vaccination and microchipping).
- Reduce short-term financial pressures for councils.
- Influence community behaviour to help reduce semi-ownership and improve cat welfare, through targeted education and appropriate incentives.

Councils can apply for a TCD grant from **5 March 2024** until 11:59pm AEST on **22 April 2024**. All eligible applications will then undergo an assessment process, led by AWV within DEECA.

The TCD grants are separate to funding available via the [Animal Welfare Fund Grants Program](#).

4 Eligibility criteria

4.1 Eligible applicants

Grant funding can be awarded to local government councils to implement free or low-cost desexing programs that specifically target:

- Residents and community members who feed cats they consider are not theirs (semi-owners) focusing on low socio-economic areas within their municipality, and
- Areas within the municipality that disproportionately contribute to high impoundment rates and nuisance complaints related to unowned and semi-owned cats.

4.2 Ineligible applicants

The following applicants are not eligible to apply for funding:

- natural persons
- local councils in non-Victorian jurisdictions
- veterinary clinics
- rescue organisations¹

Eligibility for funding is subject to a business unit assessment undertaken by AWW, to determine that the program criteria can be satisfied.

Please note that while veterinary clinics, rescue organisations and animal shelters cannot apply directly for funding, these groups can enter into partnerships with a local government council to support delivery of a proposed TCD program.

4.3 Eligible activities

Grant funding will support the following program expenditure:

1. Free or low-cost cat desexing programs run by councils targeting semi-owners, focusing on low socio-economic areas with problem cat populations. A minimum 50% of total funding must be spent on desexing semi-owned and unowned cat populations.
2. Free or low-cost desexing programs run by councils targeting residents with owned cats in low socioeconomic areas with problem cat populations.

Additionally, funding can support:

- Other financial incentives to residents to convert semi-owners to become responsible, registered cat owners. This can include the provision of free microchipping, vaccination, and reduced or free council registration for the first year of new cat registrations.
- Education campaign material to promote desexing and registration among vulnerable and/or disadvantaged residents within the low-socioeconomic areas. Please note: no more than 10% of total funding can be spent on education or promotion campaign materials.

¹ For the purpose of this grant, a rescue organisation is a Community Foster Care Network, animal shelter or pound that is engaged in rehoming cats or dogs to individuals.

- Managing semi-owned and unowned cats to which no owner can be attributed. Please note: no more than 15% of total funding can be used for this purpose, and grant funding cannot be used for euthanasia (i.e. euthanasia costs must be covered by the applicant).

4.4 Ineligible activities

Funding will not be provided for the following activities:

- cat euthanasia costs
- salaries
- legal fees
- cash prizes or commercial gifts
- ongoing or routine maintenance activities
- recurrent operating costs (such as council run pound fees)
- individual business training
- desexing programs delivered outside the program timeframe
- lobbying activities
- costs of consultants to prepare the grant application
- fees incurred when engaging residents (e.g., catering provided at a community event)
- section 69 DA Act levy
- education campaigns that could be considered political in nature (whole or part).

As an example, an applicant successful in obtaining a maximum \$25,000 grant could use the funding as follows, and comply with the eligible activities:

Activity*	Funds
Desexing semi-owned and unowned cats (50% min. expenditure)	\$12,500
Education and promotion (10% max.)**	\$2,500
Managing semi-owned/unowned cats with no owner (15% max.)**	\$3,750
Desexing cats of owners from low socio-economic areas with a problem cat population; vaccinations; microchipping; registration	\$6,250
Total	\$25,000

* Euthanasia is an ineligible activity and must be funded at the applicant's cost.

** These are maximums; applicants could spend less for these activities and redirect funds to other permitted activities.

5 Available funding

There is a total pool of \$300,000 available to support local councils in providing TCD programs. It is important the program proactively engages with target residents to deliver program objectives.

The maximum amount an organisation may request is **\$25,000**. Only one grant application will be permitted per council. Applicants must supply detailed justification for the funding amount requested.

6 Application and assessment process

6.1 Application

Councils wishing to apply for funding can do so online from **5 March 2024** until 11:59PM AEST on **22 April 2024** at:

<https://deeca.my.site.com/publicform?id=TCDAF>

6.2 Assessment process and criteria

AWV will assess applications against the assessment criteria (detailed below) and priority areas.

The Minister for Agriculture will approve and announce successful applications following completion of the assessment process.

The applicant should clearly outline:

- The goals and aims of the TCD program.
- The types of activities (project milestones) that will be delivered as part of the proposed program. This can include specific numbers of cats you plan to desex, collecting and analysing data on the number of impounded cats before, during and after the program, and/or the number of new cat registrations as a direct result of the program.
- Any additional financial or in-kind contributions by the local government council.
- The plan to ensure any staffing and additional resource requirements can be met (particularly for activities that cannot be funded through the TCD grant).
- Thorough consideration on how priority residents will be identified and engaged.
- The outcomes and benefits of the proposed program.
- The demonstrated support from third parties and relevant veterinary service(s).
- Any delivery partners, for example animal rescue groups or shelters to assist with cat rehoming.

All supporting attachments and information provided as part of the application will be taken into consideration during the assessment process.

Applications will be assessed based on a value-for-money approach, considering factors such as, the projected number of cats to be desexed and any additional services and incentives being delivered, like microchipping, vaccination and registration.

A well-reasoned plan demonstrating how the local government council will effectively target and engage low socio-economic areas, semi-owners, high impoundment areas, and areas with high nuisance complaint rates will be regarded favourably.

To minimise the spike in cat numbers between October and February each year, it is recommended that Council include targeted messaging campaigns and concentrate desexing during the colder months (Autumn and Winter), where possible.

Assessment criteria	Considerations
The extent to which the project is aligned with the TCD program objectives	<p>Application will address key priority areas and clearly outline the following (where data is readily or easily available):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics on the number of cats impounded, rehomed and euthanised within the municipality for the last financial year. • Number of cat nuisance complaints received by council, in the last financial year. • Any correlation between the above statistics and low socioeconomic areas within council, e.g., more cats collected from these areas than other areas within council. <p><i>The Australian Bureau of Statistics has interactive maps that can identify areas of relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage within your municipality (e.g. IRSAD Interactive Map). These maps can help councils target services and programs, particularly at the SA1</i></p>

Assessment criteria	Considerations
	<i>(Statistical Area Level 1) layer (See Appendix 2 for example on how to use maps)</i>
Engagement plan/design of materials that will be used to encourage participation among target residents	<p>The application will clearly explain how the applicant will involve and encourage residents to participate in the program. This includes:</p> <p>Methods to engage residents: Recommended methods are detailed in <i>Appendix 1 - Methods of Engagement ideas</i> to support this thinking. Particular attention should be paid to breaking down barriers with residents, effective engagement and amenities as outlined in Appendix 1.</p> <p>Communication plan: This should detail key messages, target audience, and proposed resources. This plan can be either simple or detailed.</p> <p>Communication resources: Any communication resources that may be used to promote the program. AWV can provide a flyer template if needed.</p> <p>Cultural inclusivity: Consider cultural inclusivity and engaging multicultural residents by translating resources into key languages where possible.</p>
The extent to which the TCD program will improve desexing rates and cat management objectives.	<p>The application will outline the anticipated benefits and expected outcomes of the TCD program, encompassing the following aspects:</p> <p>Program impact estimates: Provide estimates of the expected impact, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The projected number of cats to be desexed during the program. • The anticipated increase in the number of newly registered cat owners as a result of the program. <p>Previous programs: Include evidence of any previous programs or desexing initiatives conducted by the applicant, and any cost analysis or evaluation of benefits.</p> <p>Community support: Offer any evidence of community support for the program's aims and objectives.</p>
The quality of project and implementation planning in line with these TCD program guidelines.	<p>The application is designed to showcase the current capabilities of the applicant and offer a comprehensive justification for the funding request. This justification should encompass the following elements:</p> <p>Detailed funding justification: Provide a well-documented explanation for the requested funding amount. This may include the submission of a project plan with budget table, that outlines the program's delivery process.</p> <p>Staffing information: Include the number of staff that will be involved in implementing the program and their roles.</p> <p>Collaborative partnerships: Specify any individuals or organisations that will be involved in delivering various aspects of the program. Highlight any established partnerships with local veterinarians or animal shelters committed to supporting the program.</p>

Assessment criteria	Considerations
	<p>Timetable: Present a clear timeframe that demonstrates the proposal's readiness for funding. This should include a realistic schedule for program implementation, supported by a well-defined scope of work.</p> <p>In-kind contributions: Detail any additional funding or in-kind contributions that the applicant will allocate to support the program. This can include financial commitments or resources provided by the applicant (e.g. low-cost or free registration).</p> <p>Past Success: Provide evidence of any previous success in implementing similar resident engagement or cat desexing programs. Showcase outcomes and results from previous initiatives to demonstrate the applicant's capability.</p>
<p>The ability to effectively manage unwanted cats (i.e., partnerships with shelters, rescue groups).</p>	<p>It will be important to outline how instances will be managed if a person (semi-owner) does not want to assume legal ownership of a cat. For example, partnerships with rescue groups and shelters could be established to facilitate rehoming efforts, if the applicant cannot resource this activity internally.</p> <p>Every effort should be made to rehome cats that are healthy and suitable for rehoming. Determining suitability for rehoming can be supported in consultation with a vet.</p> <p>No funds can be used to euthanise cats deemed unsuitable for rehoming. Up to 15% of total funding can be used to manage semi-owned and unowned cats for rehoming to which no owner can be attributed.</p>

7 Terms and conditions

DEECA reserves the right to make changes to these guidelines as required.

7.1 Funding agreement conditions

Successful applicants must:

- Enter into a Project Funding Agreement with DEECA.
- Submit a written project progress report(s), as per required pro forma to DEECA.
- Submit an acquittal/final written report, as per required pro forma to DEECA, within 60 days of completing the project.
- Obtain written approval from DEECA for any proposed variations or extensions to the project plan, timeframe or budget.
- Operate public liability insurance as required, covering the project's activities and outcomes.

A project period of 18 months will be allocated for completion of projects.

Successful applicants will receive 90% of the grant allocation upon execution of a Project Funding Agreement.

The remaining 10% of funds will be paid upon DEECA's acceptance of the acquittal/final report.

7.2 Publicity

Grant recipients may be required to keep the funding confidential until a public announcement is made by the Minister or their representative. If this applies to your project activity, you will be advised of this in writing at the time you are directly notified that funding had been approved.

Recipients may be asked to assist DEECA in promotion of the TCD program. This may include involvement in media releases, case studies or promotional events and activities.

Recipients must not make any public announcement or issue any press release regarding the receipt of a grant without prior approval by DEECA.

DEECA may publicise the benefits accruing to the recipient and/or the State associated with the provision of the grant. DEECA may include the name of the recipient and/or the amount of the grant in any publicity material and in the Department's annual report.

If requested by DEECA, the recipient must ensure that the State's support is acknowledged on all promotional materials and appropriate signage consistent with the Victorian Common Funding Agreement Acknowledgement and Publicity Guidelines, which will be provided following grant approval, or as otherwise specified by the Department.

8 Reporting for program evaluation

As a condition of funding, successful applicants will be required to participate in any program monitoring and evaluation activities initiated by DEECA. This may include completing a survey for up to 3 years after program completion.

Reporting is critical to DEECA in understanding program impact, supporting continuous improvement in program design and delivering more effective cat management policies and programs in Victoria.

9 Privacy and Confidentiality

Any personal information about you or a third party in your application will be collected by the department for the purposes of administering your grant application and informing Members of Parliament of successful applications. Personal information may also be disclosed to external experts, such as members of assessment panels, or other Government Departments for assessment, reporting, advice, comment or for discussions regarding alternative or collaborative grant funding opportunities.

If you intend to include personal information about third parties in your application, please ensure that they are aware of the contents of this privacy statement.

Any personal information about you or a third party in your correspondence will be collected, held, managed, used, disclosed or transferred in accordance with the provisions of the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* and other applicable laws.

DEECA is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information. You can find the DEECA Privacy Policy online at www.deeca.vic.gov.au/privacy.

Requests for access to information about you held by DEECA should be sent to the Manager Privacy, P.O. Box 500 East Melbourne 8002 or contact by emailing Foi.unit@delwp.vic.gov.au.

9.1 Data Security and Ownership

Information included in an application is transmitted to the DEECA's secure environment once an application has been saved or submitted. Draft application forms can be seen by DEECA staff but will not be viewed in detail or assessed until it has been submitted.

10 Additional information

If council staff would like additional information or to discuss the Targeted Cat Desexing program prior to submission, please contact Mr. Srecko Karanfilovski (Stretch), Senior Policy Analyst, Domestic Animal Policy, Animal Welfare Victoria at srecko.karanfilovski@agriculture.vic.gov.au or on 0417 697 977.

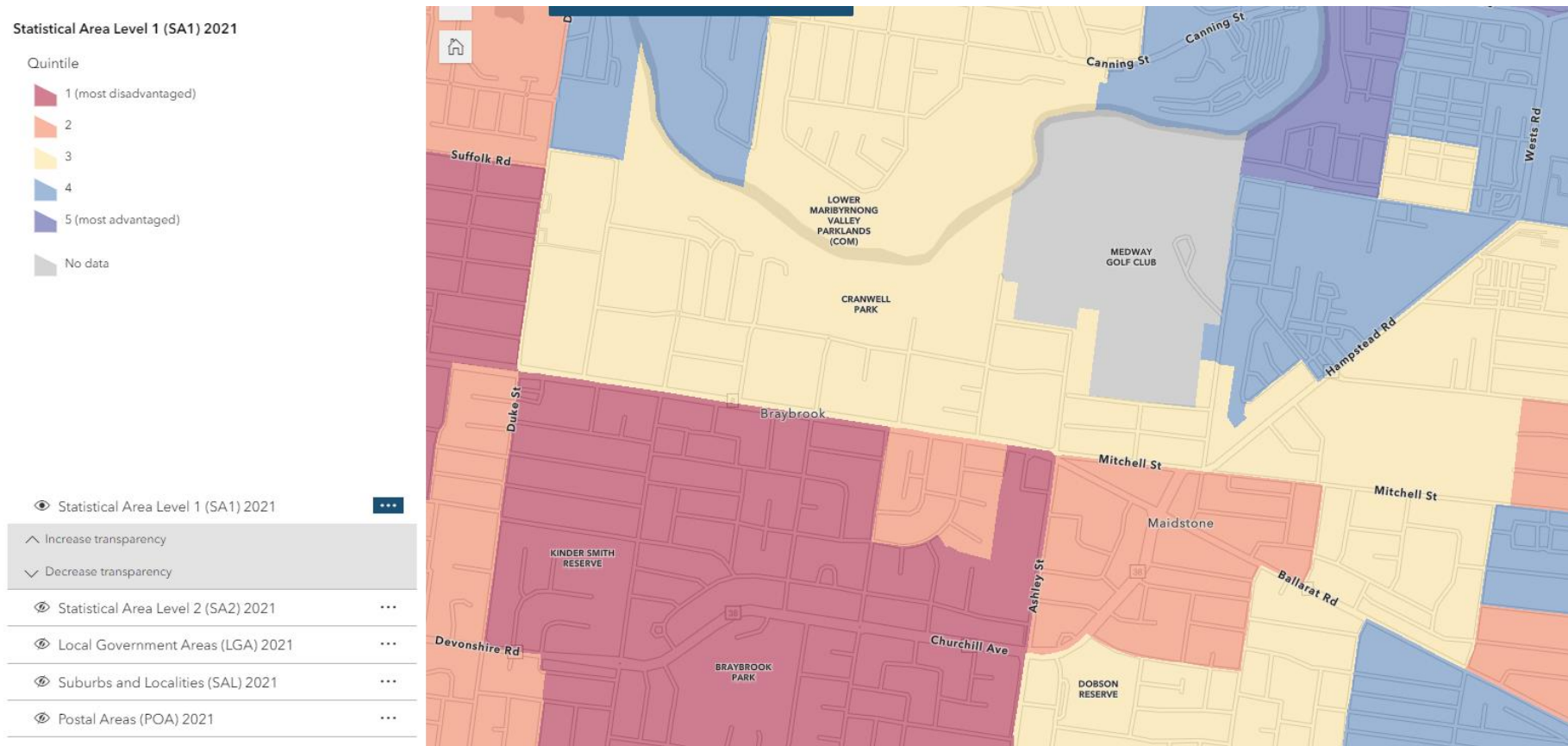
Appendix 1 – Methods of engagement ideas

Engagement idea	Potential strategies
Identify 'hot spot' areas within the municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare Australian Bureau of Statistics data about suburb demographics with pound/shelter impoundment rates.* • Refer to customer service databases that record cat nuisance complaints received by council to help identify 'hot spot' areas within the municipality. • Animal management staff knowledge of suburbs and semi-owned cat populations • Seek community feedback about hotspot areas through community surveys or social media quick polls. <p><i>*The Australian Bureau of Statistics has interactive maps that can identify areas of relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage within your municipality (e.g. IRSA Interactive Map). These maps can help councils target services, particularly at the SA1 (Statistical Area Level 1) layer. See Appendix 2 also.</i></p>
<p>Engage community to encourage proactive desexing and participate in desexing program</p> <p>Face to face communication with residents</p> <p>Education campaign to promote desexing and containment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong community engagement will be important ensure success of the program. Promoting the benefits of desexing will be vital to encourage cat owners and those who feed cats to desex cats they care for. It is important to emphasize the importance of desexing for both male and female cats. • Set up a stall in one of the hotspot areas and be physically present for residents to ask questions about the program. Should be an area that has lots of foot traffic, e.g. a shopping centre/ supermarket in one of the target suburbs. This allows council to build a relationship with the target audience. • Can reach out to social or community support organisations within council to contact target audience. • Door knocking in 'hot spot' areas where there are high impoundment rates/nuisance complaints. Invite residents to make appointment (or EOI) along with promoting the campaign. • Education campaign in the target suburbs or area within council. This will aim to encourage responsible cat ownership in tandem with the objectives of the program.
Advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter drop to residents in key areas to promote the program. Letter could be from the Council CEO or Mayor to show council is serious about helping residents to desex their cats and recognise it is a community issue. • Posters at community hubs in target suburbs, such as local shopping centres, community halls or libraries. • Targeted social media ads to residents with cats or interested in cats in target suburbs or areas.

Engagement idea	Potential strategies
Multicultural communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with cultural community leaders to share messages with target residents. Use infographics, illustrations, plain English in comms materials. Engage culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) residents, offer resources in other key languages for councils. Use any council facilities used by multicultural communities as communication hubs or locations to promote the program.
Partnership with local vet clinics and/or rescue groups and animal shelters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may wish to lean on existing relationships with local vets to partner together to deliver free desexing to the community. Establish partnerships with rescue groups or shelters to assist in rehoming suitable cats (where semi-owners will not commit to formal ownership). Try to secure these partnerships before the program begins. This can include an email or more formal agreement to demonstrate a working partnership.
An 'amnesty' or 'no questions asked' approach for those who care for or own unregistered cats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employ a judgement-free approach to encourage residents with multiple unregistered cats to take legal responsibilities for them or surrender any they cannot care for. Any such approach should be detailed in the applicant's communications plan. Partnerships with rescue groups and shelters are particularly important to assure semi-owners that surrendered cats will be well cared for and efforts made to rehome them. In certain situations, residents engaging in cat hoarding behaviours may benefit from a referral to human welfare agencies for assistance. Often, animal hoarders are caregivers with good intentions who became unable to provide appropriate care as the numbers of cats increase.

Appendix 2: Using ABS Relative Socio-Economic Indices maps to target your programs

- Go to [Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas \(SEIFA\), Australia 2021 \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com)
- Zoom into your municipality
- Select the SA1 layer and turn off any other layers that may be on by clicking the eye icon. Increase and decrease transparency by clicking on the 3 dots (...) which will open 'increase and decrease transparency' toggles so you can see the streets and the colours together.
- Relative disadvantage is shown by colour code from the most disadvantaged in red in 20% increments all the way to the most advantaged in dark blue.





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