

# Specialist Disability Accommodation

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**Quick summary:** Some people living with disability have an extreme functional impairment or very high support needs. Sometimes, they need to live in specially designed houses. We call this Specialist Disability Accommodation – or SDA for short.

## What's on this page?

This page covers:

- [What is SDA?](#)
- [Who's eligible for SDA?](#)
- [If you're eligible, how do we decide what SDA to fund?](#)
- [How do you get SDA in your plan?](#)
- [What happens once you get SDA funding in your plan?](#)
- [For providers – how can you enrol dwellings as SDA?](#)

You may also be interested in:

- [Home modifications](#)
- [Supported Independent Living](#)
- [Personal care supports](#)

## What is SDA?

Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) is a range of housing designed for people with extreme functional impairment or very high needs. SDA homes are constructed to be more accessible for you. They enable better or safer delivery of other supports you may need.

SDA usually involves a shared home with a small number of other people. You might also be able to live in SDA by yourself if that option best meets your needs and circumstances.

The aim of SDA is to make accessing supports easier. For example, you might need a home with reinforced ceilings so you can get a ceiling hoist installed.

SDA is offered by SDA providers. Providers have to enrol dwellings that meet the requirements of SDA with the NDIA.

When we talk about SDA, we mean funding for the cost of the home or building you live in. Usually, you'll still need to pay rent or other personal costs to live in SDA. SDA also doesn't include the services or support you might get in that home.

For example, it doesn't include the cost of a person who helps with personal care. This kind of support comes under [personal care supports](#) or other supports in your home.

Other than SDA, the NDIS does not generally fund permanent accommodation. Learn more about [housing options and the NDIS](#).

## Who's eligible for SDA?

If you have a home and living goal we'll help you explore your options to pursue this goal. We'll start by getting you to complete the [Home and Living Supports Request Form](#).

This helps us understand your daily support needs. Then we can discuss the home and living supports that best meet those needs.

Most people who access the NDIS don't need to live in SDA. People who do need SDA have extremely high needs. They need to live in very specialised homes, usually with high levels of person-to-person support.

To decide if someone is eligible for SDA funding, we ask three questions:

- [do you have an 'extreme functional impairment'? or 'very high support needs'?](#)
- [do you have an SDA needs requirement?](#)
- [is SDA reasonable and necessary for you?](#)

The information you include in your [Home and Living Supports Request Form](#) helps answer these questions. We use that information and any other evidence you provide to help us work out what SDA funding you can get.

Once we have all of your information we'll review it and decide if you can get SDA. We'll try to let you know our decision within 10 days.

Check out the [SDA Rules](#) for extra information.

## Do you have 'an extreme functional impairment' or 'very high support needs'?

We look at lots of different information to decide if you have these kinds of support needs. This includes:

- any information from your doctor or allied health professionals
- any details from your current providers
- your daily support requirements.

## **Extreme functional impairment**

First, we check if you have 'extreme functional impairment'. This means you have a lot of trouble doing (or can't do) daily tasks on your own. You might have a very hard time moving around, completing personal care tasks, or looking after yourself.

It also means you need lots of support from someone to do these things. This is on top of any assistive technology or other home modifications.

## **Very high support needs**

You might also be eligible for SDA if you have 'very high support needs'. This also means you need a lot of person-to-person support. Your family or friends might not be able to give you this level of support informally.

This is because it could be risky for family or friends to help out. Or, it might be dangerous for you. You may need SDA to stay safe or keep others around you safe.

You might already live in SDA or have lived in a place like SDA for a long while. If living in a non-SDA house isn't possible, you may have very high support needs.

## **Do you have an SDA needs requirement?**

We also need to make sure SDA is the right option for your care. It should greatly benefit you now and in the long term.

We think about whether SDA will give you long-term benefits for:

- pursuing your goals
- improving your functional capacity (help you do more things with less support)
- reducing your need for person-to-person supports
- creating better connections with your family, community, health services, education, and employment.

Depending on your needs, other kinds of supports could be a better option for you. This might mean you can keep living in your current home.

## **What other support options you can get?**

There might be changes we can make to your current home that would make it easier to live in. For example, fixing your bathroom if you can't use it because of your disability.

Sometimes changes aren't safe or possible to make to regular houses. This includes things like:

- structural reinforcements that make hoists and other mobility aids safe
- making all areas of a house accessible

- if you don't own your home and don't have permission to change it, or don't know how long you can live there for.

You might need alternative housing if this is the case. SDA is only one of these options.

Learn more about [housing and the NDIS](#).

### **Is SDA reasonable and necessary for you?**

Along with the above points, we need to consider if SDA is reasonable and necessary for you.

Like all supports, SDA must meet the criteria in section 34 of the NDIS Act and in the [SDA Rules](#).

Learn more about [reasonable and necessary criteria](#).

### **Does SDA help you pursue your goals better than other options?**

One thing we think about when deciding if SDA is reasonable and necessary is if it will help you pursue your goals.

We need to know SDA is a better option to help you pursue your goals compared to other supports. We also need to understand if other supports could help you pursue your goals, or might even help you more.

For example, we'll look at what is stopping you from being able to live in a regular house. We think about if there's anything we could fund to make that possible for you.

SDA might reduce your need for other supports compared to where you live now. Or, it could help you pursue other goals outlined in your statement of goals and aspirations.

### **Is SDA value for money?**

SDA funding contributes to supporting your needs. Over time, SDA may help reduce the costs of other supports you require. We think about this cost, or whether SDA is "value for money" over the long term.

We think about:

- if SDA reduces your need for other supports
- if SDA will reduce the cost of other supports you need
- if SDA can give you a greater level of independence for a longer period of time
- if you can share some supports with others
- how much informal support you have from family and friends
- if SDA will help maintain your supports and relationships
- how SDA would affect the total cost of all supports in your plan.

For most people, it's often better value for money to fund other supports and home modifications, rather than SDA funding.

### **Are there any risks we need to think about?**

Like all funded supports, we must also assess any risks that could apply. We won't provide funding if a support is likely to cause you or someone else harm.

We think about how we can help reduce any risks. For SDA, we'll discuss:

- any risks to you or others, and whether SDA would help with these
- the support model that you and your supporters feel will work best for you
- any risks if you live with other people.

We might also talk to you about how we can manage these risks in your plan. This might include:

- how long we wait to review your plan
- how often we are in contact with you
- if we need to fund any other supports to manage risk and make sure you're safe.

## **If you're eligible, how do we decide what SDA to fund?**

If you're eligible for SDA, the next step is to decide what kind of SDA we'll fund for you. We'll determine the following things for you in your plan:

- a design category
- a building type
- an appropriate location.

Check out the [SDA Rules](#) for extra information.

### **What's an SDA design category?**

We look at your support needs to recommend the right design category.

There are five SDA design categories:

1. Basic – housing that doesn't have special design features. Basic dwellings are normally older housing built before the NDIS started. Funding for this is only included in your plan if you've lived here before, and choose to continue living here.
2. Improved Liveability – housing that includes better physical access. It also has more features for people with sensory, intellectual or cognitive impairments.
3. Fully Accessible – housing that includes a high level of physical access features for people with lots of physical challenges.

4. Robust Construction - housing that includes a high level of physical access. It must be very strong and durable, reducing the chance of repairs and upkeep. The way it is built should make it safe for you and others. Robust dwellings may suit people who need help managing behaviours of concern.
5. High Physical Support - housing that includes a high level of physical access for people with significant physical impairment. This SDA is designed to help people who need very high levels of support.

### **Working out the right SDA design category for you**

We look at your individual needs when determining your SDA design category.

You may need other supports, so we'll also look at how the features of each design category would help facilitate them.

A design category isn't appropriate for you if it makes it harder to get other supports. Or, if it would be risky for your health and safety.

When we determine your design category, we'll look at reports from your doctor or other health professionals. We also look at your goals and aspirations.

We'll consider things like whether you need additional space around your bed, bathroom or kitchen to be able to use them. Or if your care needs require particular features.

Usually, we select the design category that helps you receive your other supports and has the features you need to live there. We'll also think about the support model that best suits your needs.

### **What SDA building types are there?**

There are five building types:

- Apartments – self-contained units that are part of a larger residential building.
- Duplexes, Villas, Townhouses – separate but semi-attached properties within a single land title or strata titled area. This also includes standalone villas or 'granny flats'.
- Houses – detached low rise dwellings with garden or courtyard areas.
- Group Homes – houses that hold up to five long-term residents.
- Larger Dwellings – houses that house more than five long-term residents. This is also called "Legacy". Larger dwellings are only for participants who already lived in this type of house, before their first plan.

## Determining the right SDA building type for you

Your individual needs help us work out the SDA building type that's best for you.

We think about the features of each building type, and which would meet your needs best.

We also look at how the building type would:

- help in providing your other supports
- better allow you to pursue your goals
- be more likely (than another building type) to improve outcomes for you.

Key things we also think about are:

- what kind of building you'd like to live in
- if it works with the support model you need
- whether the building type is [value for money](#).

Generally, the lowest cost building type that meets your individual needs will be what we fund.

## How do we work out the right SDA location?

We'll include an SDA location in your plan. An example of an area is Queensland – Brisbane – East. Or, Tasmania – Launceston and North East.

We decide the location by understanding:

- where you live now and where you've lived before
- where you'd like to live
- how the location would help you pursue your goals
- how you could access community and mainstream services
- how the location would help you connect with community or culture
- how the location will help you stay in touch with informal supports like family and friends.

If you have more than one place you would be happy to live in, we can include more than one location.

## What's the best support model for me?

When we determine your SDA type and location, we'll also look at what kind of support model you need.

A support model is how your person-to-person supports are delivered. It includes where those supports are provided. It also includes how your SDA and person-to-person supports work with other supports, such as assistive technology.

SDA is designed to work with a number of different support models.

Examples include:

- support provided in your SDA
- on-site support, which is available quickly to a number of SDA dwellings inside the one building
- 'mobile' support, which is available quickly to a number of SDA dwellings within a short distance from one another.

For example, you might need immediately available person-to-person support. But if you can be alone safely sometimes, the best support model for you may be on-site support or mobile support.

If you're eligible for SDA, we can also consider [personal care supports](#) or Supported Independent Living (SIL) in your plan.

We look at reports from your doctor or other health professionals when considering what kind of support model you need.

We know that your support model may change over time. For SDA we consider how often you need access to your other supports and how quickly you need to access them.

The other parts of your support model will be included in your plan individually. They're not linked to the SDA supports in your plan.

## How do you get SDA in your plan?

During your planning meeting we talk about if you're eligible for SDA. We'll also discuss what kind of SDA you might like. This process won't delay us approving your plan.

We'll talk about three key things:

- if you meet the criteria listed in [Who's eligible for SDA?](#)
- SDA design categories, building types, and locations
- if you already live in SDA and if you would like to keep living there.



## Preparing for your planning meeting

If you think SDA is right for you, we need some information to help us decide whether to fund it in your plan. We'll ask you to complete the [Home and Living Supports Request Form](#).

You also need to give us:

- any assessments of your support and accommodation needs. This includes if you are (or were) on an assessment-based waiting list
- the outcomes of formal accommodation assessments, for example ACAS (Vic.) or ACAT assessments
- your daily support needs, including the total cost of your current or likely package of supports with or without SDA. We also think about whether SDA would reduce the cost of other supports.

We may also ask for other assessments if we need help making a decision. We'll include funding in your plan if needed.

Don't worry if you don't know all of this straight away. We'll help you work it out.

## How do you get funding to keep living in SDA?

If you already live in SDA, then you don't need your eligibility tested again.

But if you currently live in Basic SDA, we'll work out a design category, building type, and location in your plan that's best for you.

We'll ask you to confirm if you want to stay in your current home, or if you're thinking about moving.

If you want to move into another home, we'll make a decision on what is reasonable and necessary to fund. We look at your needs if you want to move into something more expensive or a place with different features.

Once SDA is in your plan, it won't be removed unless you request this (or in some very rare circumstances). But the amount of money funded in each plan may change based on your needs.

## Do you have to pay rent to your SDA provider?

Once you move into SDA, you might need to make Reasonable Rent Contributions (sometimes referred to as RRC) towards your accommodation. This is paid to your SDA provider. You should discuss this with your provider.

The maximum Reasonable Rent Contribution is 25 per cent of the Commonwealth Disability Support Pension, as well as all of any Commonwealth Rent Assistance you receive.

## What if you want to share SDA with family or your partner?

If you'd like to live in SDA with:

- family members
- your partner
- another person who isn't an NDIS participant.

You can do this if it's your choice, and it doesn't present a risk to your health or safety. Anyone you share your SDA home with will have to pay rent to the SDA provider. Their rent is not capped at the rate for Reasonable Rent Contributions.

It's up to you and the people you want to live with to talk to your SDA provider and agree on how much rent needs to be paid. The rent may be close to rates for a similar home on the standard rental market.

If you want to share your SDA bedroom with another person, we'll ask you to confirm with your planner in writing who you'd like to share with.

We ask for this information only to make sure you're not being asked to share your bedroom if you don't want to. We also check that having more than one person in the bedroom won't lead to a serious risk of harm to you.

When we look at whether sharing your bedroom presents any serious risks, we consider:

- your relationship with the person you want to share with
- if the bedroom is the right size and setup for you to get the supports you need when you're sharing
- any needs and values you may have because of your religion or culture
- any hardship caused to you or people you support if you couldn't share your bedroom.

## What happens once you get SDA funding in your plan?

When you get SDA in your plan, it will show the design category, building type, and location we have approved. These things determine how much funding you get.

This funding is for the provider of your SDA. You can choose which SDA registered provider you want, unless one is outlined in your plan. They can claim the funding when they provide the home, or property, to you.

A Support Coordinator, Local Area Coordinator (LAC) or your friends and family can help you talk to providers. Make sure you tell them about your design category, building type and location.

## What happens if the type of SDA you need isn't available?

Sometimes the SDA you need won't be available. We'll still put the design category, building type and location in your plan.

This helps if you want to keep looking for a suitable place. Or, you can ask a provider to start building you a property. We can also let providers know if there's lots of people who need this kind of SDA.

Until you move into a home, your building type, design category and location will be noted in your plan as a comment. We can help confirm these details with providers if you want to talk to them about the SDA they offer.

Once you move into a dwelling, we'll update your plan to include the funding for the SDA support.

## What if you want to live in a different type of SDA to what's in your plan?

You can choose to live in any SDA property which meets the type, category and location noted in your plan. If you move homes, you must tell us so we can make sure you continue to receive the right supports.

If you want to live in a different SDA type, category or location to what's approved in your plan you'll need to ask for a review of your plan so these aspects of your SDA supports can be re-evaluated.

You may be able to live in a higher valued design category or building type than what's in your plan. But you need to talk about this with us and your SDA provider. You might need to pay more rent out of your own pocket to be able to live there.

If you agree to pay more rent to live in a higher valued design category or building type, we'll note this in your plan in case you need to move in the future.

## How do you find the right SDA provider?

In most cases, once you have SDA in your plan, you can choose the right SDA provider for you, as long as they're registered and their dwellings are enrolled.

A Support Coordinator, LAC, or your friends and family, can help you talk to providers. Make sure you tell them about your design category, building type and location.

Providers will usually advertise when they have SDA available. Some providers have online services to help you find the right SDA dwelling. Your LAC or Support Coordinator can help you find these services.

You can talk to as many SDA providers as you want to, so you can find the right provider. We can fund help for you to find a provider if you need it.

There are 2 situations where we might recommend a specific provider:

1. Specific SDA needs

Your disability may mean you need a very specific type of SDA. We might specify a provider in your plan that can offer you the kind of SDA you need.

This can be because you need a particular person to give you specialist care. Or, your support needs relate to the kind of SDA you need.

We'll only do this in limited situations and will let you know if we're going to do this.

2. Continuity and stability

In some rare cases, we fund SDA to make sure you can keep getting the same supports and care. We call this 'continuity and stability'.

If this is the case, we'll note in your plan that your SDA should be supplied by your current provider.

We include this only if changing providers would be a risk to your health or safety and will talk to you about it if we think that might apply to you.

### **Do you need to have the same provider for SDA and your other supports?**

No. You can choose the provider you would like for each of your supports.

Your SDA provider must let you change your providers for other supports at any time.

If you want, you could choose a different SDA provider to your other supports like Supported Independent Living (SIL), [personal care supports](#) or Support Coordination. That way, you pick the supports and providers that suit you best.

### **What if you have in-kind SDA?**

The NDIS gives you funding so you can choose who delivers your supports. This also allows you to choose when you get supports, and where.

But before we existed, state and territory governments paid some providers to deliver services. You might still be living in what's called 'in-kind SDA' now.

If you're transitioning to the NDIS, we can provide in-kind SDA in your plan. But you don't have to live in in-kind SDA if you don't want to. If you want to explore other options, we can help. Contact your Planner or LAC to get started.

Learn more about [in-kind supports](#).

## For providers – how can you enrol dwellings as SDA?

When an SDA property is built it needs to be enrolled with us before we can provide funding for it.

### Recent changes to enrolment

There are two options to enrol an SDA dwelling. A provider can enrol a dwelling against the new SDA Design Standard, or the current Minimum Requirements:

- SDA Design Standard - the Design Standard isn't mandatory until 1 July 2021. We announced the SDA Design Standard in October 2019.  
Learn more about the [SDA Design Standard](#).  
Learn more about the [SDA Design Standard Implementation Plan](#).
- Minimum Requirements – applications for this option will only be accepted after 1 July 2021 if you have an exemption.

Eventually, the SDA Design Standard will replace the current Minimum Requirements. Exemptions may apply.

### Applications

You must make applications in writing. The information we need for your application depends if it is for:

- the SDA Design Standard
- current Minimum Requirements.

Learn more about [enrolling a dwelling](#).

### Evidence of compliance

#### SDA Design Standard

We're accepting dwelling enrolment applications from 1 July 2020 under a new voluntary enrolment stream. The Design Standard will be mandatory from 1 July 2021.

To approve an application, providers must give us the following information:

- SDA Dwelling Enrolment Application Form
- Provider Certification Form
- Certificate of compliance signed by a qualified SDA Assessor. They must not be an employee, associate or otherwise engaged by the applicant.

The applicant must include their signature where required.

## **Design stage certification**

The SDA Design Standard allows you to obtain certification at the design or planning stage of your project.

Qualified SDA assessors can certify that the design meets the requirements of the Design Standard.

This allows us to process final dwelling enrolment applications faster. It also usually means it's less likely we'll need to ask for more information before an application is processed.

If you have design stage certification for a project, you can send it to us at [SDARegistration@ndis.gov.au](mailto:SDARegistration@ndis.gov.au) along with:

- the dwelling address
- SDA design category and building type
- number of residents
- estimated completion time.

You don't need to submit any further information until the dwelling is complete and ready to be enrolled.

## **What about exemptions?**

You can apply for an exemption for dwellings completed after 1 July 2021.

Providers can use the [Design Standard exemption application form](#) prior to 31 July 2020.

We may give exemptions where you can show:

- you have made significant financial commitments for the project in progress
- it isn't possible to alter the project plans to the new SDA Design Standard.

Exemptions will be granted solely at the discretion of the NDIA.

## **Minimum Requirements**

Providers can apply to enrol an SDA dwelling by submitting evidence of compliance with the current Minimum Requirements:

- the dwelling is complete prior to 1 July 2021
- the provider and property have an exemption, as above.

For an enrolment application to be accepted in the Design Standards stream, providers must provide the following information and documents to us, signed by the applicant where required:

- [SDA Dwelling Enrolment Application and Declaration Form](#)

## **Certification of enrolled dwellings**

The NDIA may request that another person certify the information you gave us when the dwelling was enrolled. We'll check that this information still applies to the dwelling. We'll say what qualifications the third party must have, and how independent they need to be from you.

## **Conditions of enrolment**

Providers must comply with the conditions for the enrolment for each dwelling. These are set out in Rules 28 to 30 of the [SDA Rules](#).

They include:

- the dwelling is kept in a good state of repair, and
- you notify us of any changes, and
- you provide any certificates or information required by the CEO as per the [SDA Rules](#).

If you need to notify us of anything regarding an SDA dwelling, email us at [SDARegistration@ndis.gov.au](mailto:SDARegistration@ndis.gov.au).

## **Enrolment of dwellings containing ordinary bedrooms**

The [SDA Rules](#) allow for participants to choose to live with non-participants.

Dwellings can now contain bedrooms for non-participants that don't meet the SDA Design Standard or Minimum Requirements.

Some points of note:

- we enrol dwellings per the number of "SDA compliant bedrooms"
- ordinary bedrooms are noted on the enrolment separately
- pricing for all enrolled dwellings is according to the SDA Price Guide
- entrance points and doors must comply with the SDA Design Standard or Minimum Requirements
- all areas of a dwelling that aren't bedrooms or private bathrooms (such as en suites) are shared areas that need to comply with SDA Design standard or Minimum Requirements.

If an application includes non-compliant bedrooms, providers also need to submit:

- the number of non-compliant bedrooms, as above
- the number of persons to reside in those bedrooms

- a declaration that non-compliant bedrooms won't be used to house SDA eligible participants.

## What happens after enrolment?

### Our processing times

We usually process dwelling enrolment applications within 28 days of receipt of a complete and correct application. This is as long as it includes all required information and documents.

We aren't responsible for delays due to incorrect or incomplete applications.

If an application may take longer than 28 days to process because of its complexity or other reasons, we'll notify the provider.

### Refusing to enrol a dwelling

If an application is incorrect or incomplete, and a provider doesn't get back to us, we can refuse to process it.

We might not enrol a dwelling if it does not meet the Minimum Requirements, density restrictions or other parts of the [SDA Rules](#).

If this happens, the provider will be notified and the application won't be reconsidered without further information. We might need another application if significant changes are needed to the application.

### Cancelling an enrolment

We may cancel a provider's enrolment where we become aware of any breach of the conditions of enrolment. This includes:

- complaints against the SDA provider where these are upheld by the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, and relate to the dwelling's state of repair
- if information submitted as part of the dwelling enrolment application is false or misleading
- an SDA provider refusing a reasonable request for information from us. This request may also come from the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission
- an SDA provider failing to notify us of any changes to an enrolled dwelling without a reasonable excuse
- an SDA provider failing to arrange for certification of any application matters
- an SDA provider falsifying certification of any application matters
- if we (or the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission) become aware of serious or immediate safety issues. These may indicate the dwelling is not in a good state of repair.



## **Reviewable decisions**

A decision made by the NDIA not to enrol a dwelling is reviewable under rule 26(3) of the [NDIS \(SDA\) Rules](#). A decision to cancel a dwelling enrolment is also reviewable under rule 27(4).

If you request a review of these decisions, we'll follow the same process as other reviewable decisions. For more information, refer to [Review of Decisions](#).

## **SDA Pricing**

The maximum amounts that providers can receive from NDIS funding for SDA are set out in the [SDA Price Guide](#).