

Designing for Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Fact Sheet

What is SDA?

Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) refers to accommodation that may be funded under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) for eligible participants who have an extreme functional impairment or very high supports needs.

Put simply, SDA is the design and development of a participant's physical environment i.e. a home, that can meet their needs and the delivery of support that caters for their needs. SDA does not include the support services associated with a participant, but instead the homes in which they are delivered.



Through development of SDA the NDIS sought to create an objective to ensure that all persons with disability have the same rights as any other member of Australian society, through enabling independence, social participation and exercising control and choice in matters that affect their life i.e. the house in which they reside.

Included as part of the SDA and formulated under the NDIS (SDA) Rules 2016 is a document title '*NDIS Price Guide – Specialist Disability Accommodation*', in which various requirements including suitable building types and design categories and minimum requirements are detailed for funding eligibility.

The Price Guide may be downloaded directly from the NDIS website at <https://www.ndis.gov.au/SDA-pricing-payments.html>

What buildings are suitable for SDA?

Not all buildings are suitable for SDA, so it is important to understand which types of buildings are eligible. Table 3 of the NDIS Price Guide outlines definitions of 'Building Types' which include;

- Apartment;
- Villa/ Duplex/ Townhouse;
- House/Dwelling;
- Group Home

As a minimum, dwellings of all ‘Building Types’ must contain:

- A kitchen,
- Bathroom,
- Living/dining area,
- Entrance/exit,
- At least one bedroom.

Additionally, at least one private room must be available to each long-term resident and an Onsite Overnight (OOA) Assistance room is *not* considered a bedroom. Furthermore, the maximum number of residents includes both participants and any other residents being accommodated at that dwelling.

In determining the appropriate ‘Building Type’ it is important that consultation be sought from a suitably qualified Building Practitioner such as a Building Certifier/Surveyor as inappropriate classification may result in designs that do not satisfy relevant Building legislation such as the Building Code of Australia or specific State or Territory Acts/Regulations.

For a detailed definition and criteria for suitability of a ‘Building Types’ please refer to the NDIS Price guide.

How to design for SDA?

SDA are based on five broad categories of design:

- Basic;
- Improved Livability;
- Fully Accessible;
- Robust; and
- High Physical Support

The relevance of a design category in relation to proposed SDA shall be determined in conjunction with the users of the building, to ensure the design is appropriate to support the needs of the occupants.



Furthermore, to ensure that buildings are capable of meeting the needs of participant’s who will be residing in the dwelling, it’s essential that all designs include features to enhance livability for participant’s appropriate to their needs.

Table 4 within the NDIS Price Guide sets out the ‘Minimum Requirements’ applicable to each of the five Design Categories listed above. To provide an enhanced level of access for dwellings, design categories other than Basic include additional design features from Livable Housing Australia, and include either ‘Silver’ or ‘Platinum’ level features as set out in the *Livable Housing Design Guidelines* (third edition) Australia.

A copy of these guidelines may be downloaded from the following link - <http://www.livablehousingaustralia.org.au/95/downloads.aspx>

Choosing the appropriate Design Category is important as this establishes the amount paid for a dwelling, funding prices may be found within the NDIS Price Guide starting at Table 6, or at the following link to NIDS - <https://www.ndis.gov.au/SDA-pricing-payments.html>

It should be noted that Design Categories do not include an assessment to Disability Access Standards such as AS1428.1 – 2009 (Design for access and mobility) as it is expected that these will be reviewed as part of the building certification process.

SDA design category	Definition	Minimum Requirements
Basic	Housing without specialised design features but with other important SDA characteristics (e.g. location, privacy, shared supports).	Available for Existing Stock only.
Improved Livability	Housing that has been designed to improve 'Livability' by incorporating a reasonable level of physical access and enhanced provision for people with sensory, intellectual or cognitive impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livable Housing Australia 'Silver' level • One or more 'improved Livability' design features such as luminance contrasts, improved wayfinding or lines of sight
Fully Accessible	Housing that has been designed to incorporate a high level of physical access provision for people with significant physical impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livable Housing Australia 'Platinum' level • External doors and external outdoor private areas to be accessible by wheelchair • Bathroom vanity/hand basin to be accessible in seated or standing position • Power supply to doors and windows (blinds), for retrofit of automation as necessary • Consideration must be given to whether it is appropriate for the kitchen sink, cooktop, meal preparation bench area and key appliances (dishwasher, oven, microwave oven, laundry appliances) to be accessible in seated or standing position
Robust	Housing that has been designed to incorporate a high level of physical access provision and be very resilient, reducing the likelihood of reactive maintenance and reducing the risk to the participant and the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livable Housing Australia 'Silver' level • Resilient but inconspicuous materials that can withstand heavy use and minimises the risk of injury and neighborhood disturbance including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high impact wall lining, fittings and fixtures (e.g. blinds, door handles) • secure windows, doors and external area. • appropriate sound proofing if residents are likely to cause significant noise disturbances

		<p>(if required must retrofit in new builds if not previously installed at building stage)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • laminated glass • Layout with areas of egress and retreat for staff and other residents to avoid harm if required • Consideration must be given to providing adequate space and safeguards throughout the property to accommodate the needs of residents with complex behaviors
High Physical Support	Housing that has been designed to incorporate a high level of physical access provision for people with significant physical impairment and requiring very high levels of support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livable Housing Australia 'Platinum' level • External doors and external outdoor private areas to be accessible by wheelchair • Bathroom vanity/hand basin to be accessible in seated or standing position • Power supply to doors and windows (blinds), for retrofit of automation as necessary • Consideration must be given to whether it is appropriate for the kitchen sink, cooktop, meal preparation bench area and key appliances (dishwasher, oven microwave oven, laundry appliances) to be accessible in seated or standing position • Structural provision for ceiling hoists • Assistive technology ready • Heating/cooling and household communication technology (e.g. video or intercom systems) appropriate for the needs of residents • Emergency power solutions to cater for a minimum two hour outage where the welfare of participants is at risk • 950mm minimum clear opening width doors to all habitable rooms

How do I know if my Design meets the SDA?

If you are unsure if your building design meets the intent of an SDA Design Category consider having it reviewed by Equal Access Pty Ltd to verify that all the minimum requirements are considered acceptable.

We offer desktop reviews of architectural drawings, schedules and specifications of design documentation. Your desktop review will be conducted by a dedicated team of experienced disability access consultants who collectively hold qualifications such as:

- Accredited Membership of the Association of Consultants in Access Australia
- Qualifications in Building Surveying, Architectural Design, Occupational Therapy and Risk Management
- Registration as Building Practitioners
- Membership to various industry associations
- Post graduate qualifications in performance based building and fire codes.

