



## Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Assessor Continuous Professional Development February 2023 Questions and Answers

### Please note:

- Wording in some questions was amended to better align the language that the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) uses. For example, projects are “registered” by SDA Assessors, however dwellings are “enrolled”.
- Questions considered to be out of scope for the intent of the session were not included.
- Questions relating to building classification matters and pricing which are yet to be resolved were not included.

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## Access and Egress

**Q1. Can the driveway of a High Physical Support (HPS) group home also be used as a shared entry from the allotment boundary to the front door?**

A: Ideally the driveway should be separate from the main pedestrian entry to the dwelling. There is no requirement in the current SDA Design Standard for the separation of the pedestrian entry and driveway. Therefore, the driveway can also be used as a pedestrian pathway if it satisfies all the requirements of pathways as noted in the SDA Design Standard.

**Q2. With regards to Robust Design, item 25.5 of the Design Standard notes that design drawings are to be provided (at as-built stage) showing the layout with areas of egress and retreat for Staff and other residents. Are there specific guidelines that we can refer to, to allow a better understanding of what spatial requirements are necessary, or the extent of information that is required to be submitted?**

A: SDA Assessors rely on the Designer to demonstrate this on a floor plan.

Good practice examples include:

- Showing location of any additional exit doorways provided
- Showing OOA room with an external escape/ exit doorway
- Showing L shape kitchens where there is no possibility of trapping hazard.
- Showing pathway that would be taken by staff to leave dwelling without needing to pass through Participant areas.
- Showing additional rooms that can be used by staff where they are safe and can call for assistance.

## Building Type

**Q3. What are the characteristics that define each of the apartment types?**

A: Refer to the [SDA Rules \(2020\)](#) Schedule 1 for definitions of SDA building types.

## Common property – shared driveway

**Q4. Can a ‘battle axe block’ that has been subdivided and is on its own title with a driveway deemed to be ‘common property’ be classified as a house rather than a villa if all other criteria are achieved?**

A: Due to different planning regulations nationally, please contact the NDIA for clarity on your individual situation.

**Q5. In an estate where all blocks have been sold separately and all are on their own titles they are accessed by what the estate refers to as ‘common property’ which may look like a shared driveway. How would SDA view the parcel of land at the end of the “common property”? If the dwelling met all other criteria could there be an SDA house on this parcel or would it be deemed a villa?**

A: Same as the previous response.



## Compliance for SDA Assessors, providers ad builders

**Context:** We have seen other SDA assessors sign off on items we have identified as non-compliant e.g. threshold ramps, tap accessibility, bathroom gradients, solar battery systems. We are also hearing from builders that assessors are accepting pictures of non-compliance rectifications at final-as-built stage.

**Q6. What compliance checks are in place for NDIS providers/builders who disengage our services because we are doing our job diligently and in place of another SDA assessor who will sign anything?**

A: The NDIS relies on the integrity of SDA Assessors to assess dwellings honestly. We will always investigate allegations of fraudulent behaviour. If you have concerns or feedback on the behaviour of SDA Assessors or SDA providers, please contact the NDIA by emailing [SDAHousing@ndis.gov.au](mailto:SDAHousing@ndis.gov.au) copying in [Livable Housing Australia \(LHA\)](#). LHA provides assistance to the NDIA with SDA Assessor registration.

## Design Standard – review and SDA assessor updates

**Q7. Are the Assessor Updates mandatory in SDA assessments?**

A: Yes.

**Q8. If we issue a design certificate before the next version of the SDA Design Standard is published will the final as built need to comply with the 2019 version or the new one?**

A: The dwelling will need to comply with the SDA Design Standard as it stood at the date of Design Stage Certification. When the next version of the NDIS SDA Design Standard is released, it will be accompanied by an implementation plan.

**Q9. How do people get involved with the Design Standard review? Will submissions be called for if direct involvement is not possible?**

A: The scope and terms of reference for the review and the different ways that the sector can be involved (including making submissions) will be announced on the [NDIS website](#).

**Q10. Will the SDA Rules be updated to reflect publication of the updated Design Standard once the review is completed?**

A: The Department of Social Services (DSS) is responsible for the [SDA Rules \(2020\)](#). The NDIA is given the opportunity to provide input into any changes to the [SDA Rules \(2020\)](#). At this time DSS has not indicated that they intend to make changes to the Rules.



## Density

**Q11. Regarding density rules and similar requirements - if not in the SDA Design Standard it is considered to be consulting work. Would it be better to include these requirements in a general section in the Design Standard if SDA assessors are expected to consider these?**

A: We will take this into consideration during the Design Standard review.

**Q12. How is density applied in rural areas? For example if you had 25 acres of land in a rural area, is it still limited to 10 participants, or does the density rule of 10% of the land parcel apply?**

A: The density restriction considers the number of dwellings and residents on a land parcel, but not the size of the land parcel.

## Determining the minimum design requirements

**Q13. Can a SDA assessor retrospectively assess a dwelling against the Livable Housing Australia Guidelines (LHA), where no current enrolment is held by the NDIA?**

A: An assessor can assess compliance against any standard for which they hold the appropriate qualifications.

While it is not in the SDA Assessors' role to determine SDA Type (i.e. New Build, Existing Stock or Legacy Stock), it is important to note that certification against the LHA guidelines will only meet minimum design requirements for some types.

**Q14. What happens if full compliance is not easily feasible, when a dwelling is occupied & the participant is happy with their home as it is, even though it may not fully comply to LHA assessment (as would have been technically required pre-SDA enrolment).**

A: A dwelling must meet the criteria for dwelling enrolment to be able to be enrolled as SDA. If it doesn't meet the criteria for dwelling enrolment it is not able to be enrolled.

**Q15. If a dwelling doesn't meet the standards for a new build and a design standard cannot be issued, what's the other option?**

A: There are 3 SDA stock types – New Build, Existing Stock and Legacy Stock. If a dwelling does not meet the criteria for enrolment as New Build, the criteria for enrolment as Existing or Legacy Stock should be considered. If a dwelling does not meet all the criteria for enrolment as the SDA type it is seeking to be enrolled as, it will not be able to be enrolled as SDA.

## Door Handles

**Q16. Is the sideways D the expectation internally and externally? Or is the standard sliding door external handle permitted (usually has a vertical handle, with no D, as pictured)**

A: D shape is required facing the internal side of the dwelling. Also refer to Clarification item 19.



## Dwelling enrolment amendments

### **Q17. Can a 3 bedroom apartment have only one SDA resident, or must it have two SDA residents, and therefore two compliant bedrooms and bathrooms?**

A: The [NDIS Pricing Arrangements for SDA](#) only allows for a 3-bedroom 2 resident apartment to be enrolled as SDA. SDA funding and pricing arrangements are not in scope of the role of SDA assessors. Assessors are not expected to provide advice to their clients on how a NDIS participant may be assessed for eligibility for SDA, or for what amount, or what the maximum price per resident for a dwelling would be if it were successfully enrolled as SDA.

Recommending or identifying the Building Type that applies to a dwelling is in scope of SDA Assessors.

The information to help make this recommendation is in the SDA Rules & the SDA Pricing Arrangements.

### **Q18. What happens when the SDA provider changes? Can the SDA enrolment be transferred, and the incoming provider get the balance of the 20 year enrolment, or do they need to start again with a new enrolment including meeting whatever standard is required at the time of reenrolment / transfer?**

A: SDA dwelling enrolments cannot be transferred between providers. Where there is a change in SDA providers, the dwelling enrolment must be cancelled by the outgoing SDA provider. The incoming SDA provider must then submit a new application to enrol the dwelling as SDA.

All mandatory evidence must be submitted with the new application to enrol and the new application will be assessed on its merits, regardless of the previous enrolled status. Cooperation between providers may be required to source required evidence, however where this is not possible consideration will be given by the NDIA as to what options are available to demonstrate compliance with mandatory criteria for enrolment.

The balance left of the initial 20-year pricing time frame applies noting that the 20-year timeframe commences from the date the Occupancy Certificate was issued.

### **Q19. Can a SDA provider change the design category of a dwelling after construction? e.g. To suit a participant who wants to live there?**

A: Yes, as long as the dwelling can be certified to the new design category post construction. If an entire dwelling meets more than one design category, we recommend it be assessed and certified as such at both design and final as built stages.

### **Q20. What's the process for an SDA provider to change the number of bedrooms they have e.g. originally enrolled as 4, want to change bedrooms down to 2. Modifications have been done to the dwelling to change one bedroom to another type of room but the category is still the same.**

A: The "bricks and mortar" or features of a dwelling must always be accurately reflected in the Design Standard Assessment Summary Report, including dwelling snapshot.

If a dwelling has multiple compliant SDA bedrooms, it must be assessed that way.

It is then up to the **SDA provider** to apply to enrol the dwelling in the way that accurately reflects the number of residents and use of the rooms. If the number of residents of the dwelling changes over



time, providers can submit applications to modify their dwelling enrolment i.e. House 3 resident to House 2 resident + OOA.

**Q21. Could you please post link to the dwelling enrolment process map on the NDIA website?**

A: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/media/4660/download?attachment>

**Context: A dwelling has multiple SDA compliant bedrooms, but only one person, who is funded to live alone, is going to live in it.**

**Q22. If that person moves out (or for any other reason) can the dwelling be reclassified as a higher number of bedrooms?**

A The Assessment Summary Report must always reflect the total number of bedrooms in a dwelling, including those not intended for use as SDA. The SDA provider is responsible for applying to enrol the dwelling in a way that accurately reflects the total number of residents. If the number of residents changes over time, providers can submit applications to modify their dwelling enrolment.

**Q23. Would a new design stage SDA assessment be required, or just final (as built) be required for an amendment to a dwelling enrolment?**

A: No, not when the amendment is to reflect the number of residents in the dwelling.

If the SDA provider is seeking to change the design category then yes, a new assessment at both design stage and final as built stage would be needed to show compliance with the new design category in the SDA Design Standard.

**Q24. Would the dwelling need to meet the updated SDA design standard if there had been one?**

A: If there are changes to a dwelling's design category they must be certified against the current version of the SDA Design Standard.

## Fire Safety

**Q25. Can we expect that fire sprinklers will become mandatory for some design categories such as High Physical Support?**

A: Appendix A of the SDA Design Standard (2019) outlines general best practice recommendations. The SDA Pricing Review is currently considering fire sprinklers as part of its Terms of Reference.

**Q26. What are the requirements for fire separation between particular dwelling types and requirements of ceiling treatments?**

A: The [SDA Rules \(2020\)](#) and [NDIS Pricing Arrangements for SDA](#) requires each dwelling to be separated by a fire-resisting wall. Fire resisting walls between attached SDA Dwellings must be designed as per the requirements of the National Construction Code (NCC). This is determined by a Building Certifier not the SDA Assessor.



## Insurance

### **Q27. Would you consider the appliances being removed while the NDIS enrolment process occurs and nobody in the dwelling?**

A: The necessary insurances should be taken to cover theft. The appliances must be in place during the final-as-built assessment. When a SDA eligible participant moves into the dwelling it is the expectation that all appliances are in place.

## Land Parcel

### **Q28. I have had people enquire about having 2 parcels of land side by side (separate land titles due to subdivision/battle axed). As it's separate land titles, would this be considered separate land parcels, even though the owner is the same?**

A: Yes. While these are defined as separate land parcels and building in this manner is permissible within the [SDA Rules \(2020\)](#), this type of development does not align with the NDIS view of contemporary accommodation for people with a disability. Clusters of people with significant disabilities does not promote inclusion in the community this is about who lives there and not the convenience of support providers. Assessors should refer any questions regarding these issues to the NDIA.

### **Q29. If three land parcels were subdivided and meet housing requirements?**

A: Same answer as for the previous question.

### **Q30. Can we have a concise definition for Parcel?**

A: The [SDA Rules \(2020\)](#) (Paragraph 31) provides a definition of a parcel of land for each State and Territory at Section 31 (4).

## Multi-design category assessment

### **Q31. Is it possible to enrol a bedroom as for example both Robust and High Physical Support and, do I write certificates for each category?**

A: No, a single bedroom cannot be enrolled as a multi-category design. If the bedroom and all shared areas meet multiple design categories the certificates should be issued for each of the categories with which it complies.

### **Q32. Can enrolled SDA have ground floor Robust with OOA and the top storey for other persons living with disability that are not SDA eligible?**

A: Contact [SDAHousing@ndis.gov.au](mailto:SDAHousing@ndis.gov.au) for more information about the specific situation.





## Onsite Overnight Assistance (OOA)

**Q33. If a SDA provider is providing 10 HPS 1 bed plus 1 bed OOA room apartments why do they need to provide an extra apartment for OOA?**

A: The NDIS does not enrol 1 bedroom plus 1 bedroom (for OOA) apartments. OOA cannot be provided from within an apartment in which a participant resides. Refer the provider to the [NDIS Pricing Arrangements for SDA](#) which outlines the conditions for the provision and claiming of OOA for apartments.

**Q34. Can an OOA space be dedicated as a desk (not a room and not bounded by walls), in a "Villa/Duplex" design category development?**

A: No. The OOA allowance is only paid where an additional **room** is used by support staff who provide support services overnight to participants living in the same dwelling that contains the OOA room or in a near-by dwelling.

**Q35. Can an apartment have a non-funded OOA? NDIA needed the OOA removed from apartments in the past. Even though it was understood it would not be funded.**

A: No. OOA has never been able to be provided from within an apartment in which a participant resides, if there was an additional room it would be considered a bedroom, not OOA.

**Q36. In designs for OOA, does a carer's room also demonstrate this?**

A: Yes, this is acceptable noting that for apartments claiming OOA, the OOA must be provided from a separate apartment as per the SDA Pricing Arrangement.

**Q37. Has it been mandated to include a snapshot of the OOA? If so when was this issued?**

A: An updated Assessment Summary form will be released to assessors shortly which will require a snapshot of the OOA apartment and its location in relation to the apartment seeking enrolment. Since January 1 2023, the NDIS has been making this request directly to Assessors, noting the updated form will reduce this need.

**Q38. Recent clarification advised that a Studio Apartment for OOA is not permitted. Should OOA apartments in residential buildings be fully designed to Improved Liveability as a minimum, for example all doors (other than entry door) to have a minimum clear opening width of 820 mm?**

A: The clarification regarding the permissibility of studio apartments as OOA has been repealed. OOA apartment size and design requirements has been referred to the SDA Pricing Review.

**Q39: If someone is purchasing one unit in an apartment building, what is the OOA expectation – do they need to purchase a second unit for their OOA when no other units are sharing this?**

A: Providing OOA is not mandatory, but where it is provided it must meet the requirement as outlined in the [NDIS Pricing Arrangements for SDA](#).

**Q40. In a complex of villas, where a communal OOA facility is provided, is it acceptable for each villa to contain a very small OOA room (e.g. desk and chair enclosed by doors, similar to European laundry)?**

A: If the complex already has shared OOA, any additional space to be used by staff within a participant's home must be negotiated with the SDA resident(s).



**Q41. Will the checklist or assessment summary form be updated to ensure that we are able to:**

- i. **inform our clients of the items the NDIS is requesting within the OOA and**
- ii. **assess that the OOA has the minimum design requirements the enrolment team is requesting?**

A: An updated Assessment Summary form will be released to assessors shortly which will require a snapshot of the OOA apartment and its location in relation to the apartment (s) seeking enrolment. There are no other items or design requirements at this stage.

**Q42. Can the purpose and use of the OOA be itemised so that an assessment of suitability can be made, and the designs of them will surely improve e.g. bed, files storage, handbag/coat personal belongings security, monitoring equipment, bathroom with shower, acoustic privacy, meeting, computers, window/natural ventilation etc.**

A: OOA purpose and use will be referred to the SDA Design Standard Review.

## Performance Solutions

**Q43. Is the NDIA likely to set up a SDA technical advisory panel or option for a ruling on decisions that deviate in any way from the SDA Design Standard?**

A: The rationale for a technical advisory panel or similar is acknowledged and is under consideration.

## Photo/video virtual assessments

**Q44. If we ask for a power outlet to be lifted – can we get a photo showing the location has been corrected [instead of attending in person]?**

A: The NDIA is working to develop a list of items and maximum number of items for which dated photographic / video evidence rather than in person attendance will be accepted when reassessment is required.

**Q45. If you won't accept photos will you accept a virtual inspection via a video call?**

A: Same answer as above.

## Pricing

**Q46. Will there be a 1-bedroom house price for SDA in the future?**

A: Pricing is out of scope for SDA Assessors.

## Refurbishment

**Q47. Whose role is it to determine that a dwelling meets the definition of New Build Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA)? i.e. the costs of renovations for an existing building meet the price guide requirements.**

A: It is the role of the NDIS to determine if the dwelling meets the definition of New Build SDA as per the [SDA Rules \(2020\)](#).



The role of the SDA Assessor is to determine if the dwelling meets the requirements of the SDA Design Standard, not consider the cost of the refurbishment. However, it would be reasonable for the SDA Assessor to refer their client to Appendix F of the [NDIS Pricing Arrangements for SDA](#) for further information.

## Sanitary Facilities

**Q48: Clause 7.1.4 states 'At least one WC pan on the entry level'. When you have a house with 2 or 3 bedrooms and each has an ensuite, does only one of the required WC pans need to comply?**

A: If a bedroom has an ensuite then it needs to be of the same design category as the bedroom it is attached to. This has been clarified in Clarification Item 15.

## Solar and uninterrupted power supply (UPS)

Questions raised both prior to and during the CPD session are recorded below. The general statement below is applicable to all.

**Q49. What about solar batteries that have a UPS built in?**

**Q50. I assume this is locally provided solar power to UPS and not communities that are powered by solar?**

**Q51. Does the Agency non-acceptance of solar power for UPS also include battery back up?**

**Q52. Regarding the emergency power supply, I am seeing an independent battery that can be powered from mains and solar. It has the comparability for both. Therefore, it is not just a solar battery. It is an independent battery. Can you please provide some clarification regarding this?**

General statement in response to all solar and UPS questions:

At this stage, the NDIA's position is that the technology for solar power and storage is not yet at a level that gives high enough confidence to accept it for participants requiring an uninterrupted power supply. All UPS considerations will be discussed further in the review of the NDIS SDA Design Standard.

## Contacting the teams

**Q53. Can we get a phone number for the Home and Living team in NDIS, or some advisory person we can talk to? I like how we can email them, but sometimes it's good to talk to a person and hash out multiple concerns.**

A: For transparency in the market the NDIS Market Practice and Mainstream team (SDA) will answer queries via email in the first instance ([SDAHousing@ndis.gov.au](mailto:SDAHousing@ndis.gov.au) or [SDAEnrolment@ndis.gov.au](mailto:SDAEnrolment@ndis.gov.au)). A follow up phone call or teams meeting can be arranged if required.

