

The top 10 things to know about SDA



VALID's plain language guide to NDIS
Specialist Disability Accommodation



Information about VALID

The Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability (VALID) is the peak organisation in the Victorian disability sector representing people with an intellectual disability. VALID is run by and for people with disability and their families. VALID has particular expertise in networking and providing information to people with disability and families across the state.

VALID is committed to the vision of an Australian nation in which people with a disability are empowered to exercise their rights – as human beings and as citizens – in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

VALID strives to realise its vision through a range of strategies that work to empower people with disabilities to become the leaders of their own lives.

About this resource

This is a plain language resource. Plain language makes information easier to understand and to translate. Writing is in plain language if the language, structure, and design are so clear that the reader can easily find what they need, understand what they find, and use that information.

Unfortunately, Government frequently uses complicated language. We have included the way the NDIS talks about certain topics at the end of the main pages under the heading 'NDIS Language'.

Some information provided in this document is specific to Victoria. While the NDIS rules apply nationally, all the comparisons and examples are from the Victorian disability services system.

Acknowledgments

This resource has drawn on a number of other resources and documents from organisations and people including:

- The NDIS. See <https://www.ndis.gov.au/specialist-disability-accommodation> for further information
- The Summer Foundation. See <https://www.summerfoundation.org.au> for further information
- Joseph Connellan. See <http://mctwo.com.au> for further information



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1

SDA means Specialist Disability Accommodation

Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) is a physical 'bricks and mortar' building. It is for people who need daily in-home support for their very high physical support or safety needs.

SDA is the home a person lives in. It might be a house or apartment or unit or another type of building. It does not refer to other supports that are provided by people or assistive technology.

SDA is not free. It is specialist accessible housing for NDIS participants, who will need to pay rent to their landlord, just like everybody else.

People usually share SDA with other participants, but the rules also allow for people to live in SDA by themselves or live in SDA with people without disability.

For new builds there may be no more than 5 people living in a single SDA dwelling.



NDIS Language

The language the NDIS uses to describe Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) is 'accommodation for people who require specialist housing solutions to assist with the delivery of supports that cater for their 'extreme' functional impairment or very high support needs'.

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SIL means Supported Independent Living

Supported Independent Living (SIL) is assistance you receive from paid support workers at home that helps you live as independently as possible. SIL includes physical supports like helping you get in and out of bed every day. It includes support for people who need help doing things by themselves. It includes keeping people safe.

Funding for SIL does not depend on where you live. All NDIS participants may be eligible for SIL funding, whether they rent privately, own their own home, live with others, or live in Specialist Disability Accommodation.

There are three levels of SIL funding:

1. 'Lower needs' provides regular supervision of living arrangements.
2. 'Standard needs' provides 24/7 active assistance of most daily tasks.
3. 'Higher needs' provides continual and more complex active assistance to the individual.

Many people will only receive SIL funding, and only some participants will receive SDA and SIL together.



NDIS Language

The language the NDIS uses to describe Supported Independent Living (SIL) is 'assistance with and/or supervising tasks of daily life to develop the skills of individuals with disability to live as autonomously as possible. SIL supports are daily living services provided onsite in the participant's home'.

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SDA and SIL are different

Before the NDIS, funding for an accessible house and in-home supports went together. This is because daily personal support was only available in supported accommodation.

In the NDIS, these supports have been separated. The NDIS recognises that most people who need SIL are able to live in an ordinary home that is already available and does not need modification. Most people who will have SIL approved as a reasonable and necessary support in their plan will not need SDA.

Because SDA and SIL are different, they are funded separately in a participant's plan. Separate funding gives people with disability more choice and control of over where they live and the services they use.

Before the NDIS if you didn't like your support workers, you had to move house. If you didn't like your house and you moved, you had to change your support workers, even if you liked them.

Having the funding separated means that you are able to change your support workers easily without having to move house.

NDIS Language

NDIS Plans that include SDA will have a separate section for this. SIL will appear in the section on Core Support under the heading 'Assistance in Shared Living Arrangements – Supported Independent Living'. This is described as 'assistance with and/or supervising tasks of daily life in a shared living environment, with a focus on developing the skills of each individual to live as autonomously as possible. The support is provided to each person living in the shared arrangement in accordance with their need.'

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SDA and SIL must be purchased from different providers

The NDIS rules say that participants who have both SDA and SIL in their plans must purchase these supports from different providers.

This means that the SDA provider (that provides your house) and your SIL provider (the support workers that help you) must be different organisations. This is a big change.

Before the NDIS, the organisation that provided your house also provided your support workers.

The reasons for the new rule are to give people with disability more control and choice, and to keep people safe.

SDA is the specialised building you live in.

SIL is the supports you receive from people paid to help you live independently.

People have more control and choice when their SDA and SIL providers are different organisations. When things go wrong, it is much harder to resolve things if you have to move house to fix issues with your support staff.

People are safer when their SDA and SIL providers are different organisations. People are less likely to experience abuse or neglect when there are a number of different people in their day-to-day lives.

NDIS Language

The language the NDIS uses is 'Participants that have both SDA and SIL in their plan should have greater flexibility under the NDIS to choose where they will live and which organisations will provide their supports. The [NDIS] will support residents' rights in their homes, including ability to choose a different SIL provider but still remain in their SDA property, by promoting the separability, and ultimately separation, of provision of SDA and SIL.'

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SDA eligibility requirements

The NDIS participants who get SDA in their plans are people who, even with appropriate home modifications and/or assistive technologies, still need a high level of in-home support from a paid worker with daily activities such as:

- Getting in and out of bed
- Getting dressed
- Moving around
- Preparing meals
- Accessing the community

The NDIS will approve SDA for people with very high support needs. 'Very high support needs' means one or more of the following:

- That your 'informal supports' (people who help you but don't get paid for their help; often family or friends) can't meet your personal care needs
- You have spent a long time in a group home or residential aged care (this includes people who already live in Shared Supported Accommodation / Group Homes / young people living in nursing homes etc.)
- You use behaviours that pose a risk to yourself or others.

NDIS Language

The language the NDIS uses to describe SDA eligibility is 'SDA is intended for participants who have an extreme or complete functional impairment due to disability or have very high support needs (including housing needs) most appropriately met by an SDA response. SDA will only apply where suitable alternative supports and pathways have been considered, including capacity building, mobilising social capital, support coordination and home modifications.'

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SIL eligibility requirements

The NDIS participants who get SIL in their plans are people who need assistance with and/or guidance to help develop their skills to undertake tasks of daily life.

Participants receive SIL funding for things like:

- Regular support to help people build their independence skills
- Full-time active or highly frequent assistance with managing challenging behaviours that require intensive positive behaviour support or active management of complex medical needs such as ventilation

NDIS participants may receive a combination of individual (1:1) supports, shared supports and irregular supports.

Irregular supports are those supports that are unplanned (e.g. participant unable to attend day program due to illness so a support worker comes over to help at home that day).

SIL does not cover other types of supports such as attending day programs, community access not related to a household activity (e.g. grocery shopping), personal care while in the workplace, other government and mainstream supports, etc. If these supports are required and approved, they will be provided elsewhere in a participant's plan.

NDIS Language

The language the NDIS uses to describe Supported Independent Living (SIL) is a funded support/ funding for time with a support worker that provides NDIS participants with assistance with and/or guidance to help develop their skills to undertake tasks of daily life. The amount of funding for SIL approved as a reasonable and necessary support in an individual's plan will depend on their level of need, as well as the number of people living in the home.

The support available under SDA

The main design categories of SDA are:

- Improved Access
- Fully Accessible
- High Physical Support
- Robust

There are three categories based around physical access, with each level demanding a higher level of accessibility.

Improved Access

Improved Access buildings require a 'reasonable' level of physical access. New buildings must have improved livability design features such as luminance contrasts, improved wayfinding or lines of sight for people with sensory, intellectual or cognitive impairment

Fully Accessible

Fully Accessible housing must have a 'high' level of physical access provision for people with significant physical impairment and have good wheelchair accessibility in the bathroom, kitchen and external areas.

High Physical Support

High Physical Support housing needs a very high level of specialised design and physical access. New builds must have structural provision for ceiling hoists, be assistive and communication technology ready, and have emergency power solutions and wider than usual door openings.

Robust

The other category of housing has a different focus. Robust housing must also have good physical access, but is also designed to be very resilient and safe. The design must include retreat areas for participants and staff, and the materials used must be impact resistant and reduce the need for repairs and maintenance.

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The SDA process is complicated

Going through the process of applying for and receiving SDA is quite complicated.

NDIS goals must include housing

Firstly, housing needs to be one of your goals in your NDIS plan. If you are not happy with where you live, or it is time to leave home, it's important that you talk about this at your NDIS planning meeting.

Check whether your housing goals can be met without SDA

Usually the next step is that the NDIS provides capacity building funding for participants who need support to explore their housing options. This might help to develop your housing plan or support to assess your housing and support needs. This process helps participants work out if the housing support they need is:

- Home modifications on an existing building
- Assistive technology,
- Just SIL, or
- SDA (with or without SIL)

The NDIS will only approve SDA if this is the only way your housing goals can be met.

Other challenges

If you receive SDA as a reasonable and necessary support, there are still other processes to go through to find the best property for you where you can choose where and with whom you live.

At the moment there is not enough SDA housing, especially in the robust and high physical support categories. So another challenge might be to work with your preferred SDA provider to find or build a new SDA property.

A key question with SIL is that the NDIS starts with the assumption that people who need daily in-home supports will always be sharing a house with at least one other person with disability who also needs similar daily in-home support.

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Most NDIS Participants will NOT get SDA

The NDIS itself predicts that only 6% of participants will qualify for SDA. This means that 94% will NOT get SDA approved in their plans.

This is because most people will be able to have their housing goals met via mainstream housing, or home modifications on an existing building, or via assistive technology, or by being provided with SIL supports.

Most people with intellectual disability will not get SDA.

This is a big change for people with intellectual disability or cognitive impairment that have no (or very low) physical access needs. NDIS participants in this group are highly likely to receive SIL, but not SDA.

This is confusing at the moment because people with intellectual disability or cognitive impairment with no physical access needs that already live in Shared Supported Accommodation will transition into SDA, even though they might not qualify if they were applying now.



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Most NDIS participants will need to find their own housing

Most people in the NDIS will need to find their own housing, just like everybody else. This might include private ownership (including living at home with parents) where the person owns, or is buying their own home with a mortgage. It also might include private rental. Many people have found that sharing a house with one or two other people can make the rent they pay much lower.

Many NDIS participants will find it difficult to find affordable housing because they have low income and not many assets.

The Victorian State Government provides affordable housing at a reduced cost to people with disability and other people with low incomes. This is called 'social housing'.

Housing Register

The way people with disability can get access to social housing is through the Housing Register

<http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/victorian-housing-register-makes-applying-housing-easy>

NDIS participants are given priority in the Housing Register, which potentially will give quicker (often years quicker) access to a house.

What VALID does

VALID is an award-winning organisation that has been at the forefront of advocating for people with a disability in Victoria since 1989. Over that time, we have developed training tools, information and resources to help empower people with disability and their families.

The **Choice Mentors** project supports people with disability to build their capacity to make decisions about the support they receive from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), with the assistance of trained volunteers.

Peer Action Groups for people with disabilities and their families to support each other to prepare for and engage with the NDIS.

Our **Individual Advocacy** work upholds the rights of individual people with disability by working against discrimination, abuse and neglect.

Our **Systemic Advocacy** seeks to remove the barriers and address discrimination to ensure the rights of all people with disability.

The **Keys to Success program** educates and empowers people with disabilities to know about their rights and responsibilities and be more confident in speaking up when making choices and decisions about their life.

The **Families as Planning Partners** team supports families to be partners in advocating for the rights and interests of their family member with a disability and supports them to be allies in the provision of support to their family member.

The **Community Development** team provides resources and strategies that encourage and develop connected and informed communities that support the rights of people with a disability to be included as full citizens.

VALID's **Advocacy Training** in advocacy principles and skills is offered to people who have a role in supporting, assisting or representing people with a disability.

The **Having a Say conference** is the largest conference for people with disabilities within Australia where people can find their voice, to speak up, to be heard and to be respected. This is the conference where people respect each other's views and opinions, and celebrate their common cause.





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