

Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) Design Standard Review 2025-26

Terms of Reference

Context

Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) is a type of capital support that may be funded under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) for eligible participants who have an extreme functional impairment or very high support needs.

SDA refers to accommodation for people who require specialist housing solutions to assist with the delivery of supports to enhance self-determination and create the conditions for participants to lead vibrant, safe and independent lives.

The SDA Design Standard sets out the minimum design requirements for new build dwellings that are to be enrolled as SDA across 4 design categories that aim to meet the diverse needs of participants who require specialist housing. The design categories are:

- Improved Liveability
- Fully Accessible
- Robust
- High Physical Support.

The SDA Design Standard was first introduced in 2019 and became mandatory for new build and new build refurbished SDA from 1 July 2021. While the Standard has remained broadly unchanged since first released, the environment has evolved, with advances in accessibility, assistive technology, sustainability, building practices and shifts in market demand now guiding the need for a review.

The Agency has engaged KPMG Australia to conduct the full Review and to develop the next edition of the SDA Design Standard (Edition 2.0).

Regulatory environment

The SDA Design Standard operates within and according to legislation and national construction regulations. The Review aims to improve technical and regulatory alignment by identifying and addressing gaps in the current Standard, clarifying definitions, and ensuring consistency with relevant legislative frameworks, including:

- The National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 (NDIS Act)
- The NDIS (Specialist Disability Accommodation) Rules 2020
- National Construction Code (NCC)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework
- and relevant state, territory and local planning regulations.

Objectives

The objectives of the SDA Design Standard Review are to:

1. Ensure that the SDA design requirements are fit for purpose and aligned with relevant industry standards.
2. Support the future development of safe, modern, high-quality homes that meet the needs of NDIS participants eligible for SDA.
3. Understand the experiences of people living in, supporting, working with, investing in, and constructing SDA to deliver recommendations that;
 - Strengthen safety and quality of SDA.
 - Promote independence and inclusion of participants living in SDA.
 - Explore and identify innovative, appropriate technology and sustainable design solutions.
 - Support efficient delivery of supports.
 - Ensure consistency with legislative and regulatory frameworks.
 - Consider the financial sustainability of the NDIS.
4. Assess and understand the financial and market impacts of proposed changes to the SDA Design Standard.
5. Deliver SDA Design Standard Edition 2.0 and implementation plan, ensuring alignment with NDIS principles.

Scope

The SDA Design Standard Review will examine whether the current Standard remains effective, nationally consistent and responsive to the needs of NDIS participants.

The Review will include activities such as consultation, research, and analysis, to provide clear recommendations that will guide the development of SDA Design Standard Edition 2.0.

Key areas of scope

Stakeholder consultation and research

- Consult with a wide range of SDA stakeholders (including participants and their families and carers, SDA providers, peak bodies, developers, investors, architects, town planners, SDA assessors, access consultants, building certifiers and surveyors, state and territory statutory bodies and local planning authorities, allied health professionals, technology providers, NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission and NDIA staff), through interviews, workshops, submissions and surveys.
- Gather meaningful insights from the experience of key SDA stakeholders and relevant research to inform recommendations and develop best practice guidance.

Detailed design requirements

- Review and update technical and design requirements to identify gaps, strengthen safety (including both life and fire safety) and quality measures.

- Examine design-specific elements, including detailed requirements for Robust housing and Onsite Overnight Assistance (OOA) spaces.
- Review alignment of current and proposed technical and design requirements with relevant legislative and regulatory frameworks.
- Review the allocation of technical and design requirements across current design categories.
- Investigate options to enhance participant-centred design such as culturally appropriate designs and processes for limited exceptions (performance solutions).

Innovation, technology and environmental sustainability

- Assess opportunities for innovation in design, including the integration of assistive technology and home automation, and design solutions that support independence, the delivery of best practice and cost-effective in-home supports, and future-proofing of properties.
- Consider environmental sustainability, including the inclusion of environmentally sustainable and energy-efficient features.

Market and financial impacts

- Review the financial and market impacts of proposed changes to the SDA Design Standard, including a baseline cost review to analyse the short, medium and long-term implications for participants, providers, developers and investors.

Approach

The NDIA has engaged KPMG Australia to complete the Review. This includes undertaking stakeholder consultation, completing research, analysis, market and financial assessments, and risk analysis required to support the Review.

Recommendations developed from the consultation and research will be reviewed by a Technical Working Group (TWG) and may be tested through targeted Focus Groups.

The Review will deliver a set of recommendations for the development of SDA Design Standard Edition 2.0. It will also deliver the SDA Design Standard Edition 2.0, supported by an implementation plan that includes timelines for Edition 2.0 to be adopted.

Outcomes of the Review will be guided by NDIS principles of independence, choice, inclusion, quality supports, and sustainability.

Governance

KPMG Australia will conduct the Review and will provide advice and report to the NDIA.

The Review will be supported by a Technical Working Group (TWG) managed by KPMG, consisting of 8 to 10 members with expertise in areas such as SDA, housing and construction and disability access and inclusion.

The TWG will function as an advisory body to provide expert technical advice, including on the feasibility, practical implications and evidence base for the proposed changes to the SDA Design Standard. Final decisions regarding the Review will be made by the NDIA.