

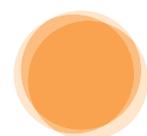


# SPECIALIST DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION (SDA) PAYMENTS

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A GUIDE FOR NDIS PARTICIPANTS & PROVIDERS

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SUMMER  
FOUNDATION



# ABOUT THIS GUIDE

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This guide explains what specialist disability accommodation (SDA) payments are, who they are paid to and how they are accessed. It also explains the different types of SDA. For people who have SDA payments included in their NDIS Plan, it explains how to make the most of this funding.

This guide forms part of a series of information resources that the Summer Foundation has prepared about accessing housing; it is designed for younger people with complex support needs, their families and supporters, NDIS support coordinators and providers.

As the NDIS rolls out, changes are sometimes made to the way things are done. As things change, we will update the information in this guide. **You can find the latest version of this guide here:** [🌐 summerfoundation.org.au/sda-payments-guide](https://summerfoundation.org.au/sda-payments-guide)



## THIS SPECIALIST DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION (SDA) PAYMENTS GUIDE IS IN THREE PARTS:

- **Part 1** – explains what SDA payments are, who they are paid to and how they are accessed
  - **Part 2** – explains the different types of SDA, including SDA Design Categories and building types
  - **Part 3** – for people who have SDA payments included in their NDIS Plan, this section explains how to make the most of them
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# PART 1: SPECIALIST DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION (SDA) PAYMENTS

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The NDIS funds the cost of housing for eligible NDIS participants whose extreme functional impairments or very high support needs mean that they are unable to live in mainstream housing. This is only for around 6% of participants.

## Specialist disability accommodation (SDA)

Specialist disability accommodation (SDA) is housing that has been specially designed or modified to suit the needs of people who have an 'extreme functional impairment' or 'very high support needs'.

**Extreme functional impairment** means that, even with appropriate home modifications and/or assistive technologies, you will still need support with daily activities such as:

- getting in and out of bed
- getting dressed
- moving around
- preparing meals
- accessing the community

**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
- you have behaviours that pose a risk to yourself or others



## SDA payments

SDA payments are made by the NDIS to SDA providers for the cost of housing a person with an extreme functional impairment or very high support needs. The payment is for the actual property ('bricks and mortar'), and is paid in addition to other supports in the person's NDIS Plan.

The NDIS will only use SDA payments to support a small number of people. The amount paid in SDA payments will vary, depending on the type of housing, the level of accessibility the housing provides and where it is located.

SDA payments are usually available to people already living in disability housing. Some people with very high support needs live in residential aged care, in hospital, or with ageing parent carers. If you have very high support needs, but don't already live in disability housing, you may need capacity building funding from the NDIS to search for suitable housing and write a Housing Plan. The NDIS will use the information in your Housing Plan to decide whether SDA payments are reasonable and necessary for you.



### **AN IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT SDA PAYMENTS AND HOME MODIFICATIONS**

The NDIS may fund either home modifications to enable you to live in mainstream housing or SDA payments to support you in SDA, but will not fund both for the same house. So if the NDIS pays for home modifications for you to live in mainstream housing, they won't provide SDA payments for that house in the future. In the same way, if the NDIS provides SDA payments for you, they will not fund the modifications for your SDA home.



## Accessing SDA payments

Having capacity building funding from the NDIS to search for suitable housing and write a Housing Plan is the way to find out if you are eligible for SDA payments. If you are currently in unsuitable housing – including a group home – capacity building funding from the NDIS is a way to search for more suitable housing including new SDA developments.

You and your support coordinator will use your NDIS capacity building funding to search for appropriate mainstream housing and document the outcome of that search in your Housing Plan. If your Housing Plan confirms that you can't access mainstream housing because of your extreme functional impairment or very high support needs, your support coordinator may recommend that the NDIS provide you with SDA payments. Your Housing Plan may also recommend which of the five SDA Design Categories would maximise your independence and tell the NDIS where you would prefer to live.

Ultimately, the NDIS will use your Housing Plan to decide whether you require SDA and only around 6% of all NDIS participants will be eligible for SDA payments. It's important that your Housing Plan provides evidence of your housing needs and preferences, so that the NDIS can decide whether SDA is 'reasonable and necessary' for you.

For more information about using NDIS funding to look for suitable housing, see our Looking for Somewhere to Live guide:

[🌐 summerfoundation.org.au/looking-for-somewhere-to-live](https://summerfoundation.org.au/looking-for-somewhere-to-live)

Our Housing plan tool may help you prepare your Housing Plan:

[🌐 summerfoundation.org.au/housing-plan-tool](https://summerfoundation.org.au/housing-plan-tool)

## Assessing your need for SDA payments

The NDIS will decide whether providing you with SDA payments will:

- Assist you to maximise your independence and reach the goals in your NDIS Plan
- Support you to participate in family, social and economic activities
- Be good value for money for the NDIS
- Be appropriate in light of what your family, informal networks, mainstream services and the community are able to provide.



## If the NDIS decides you are eligible for SDA payments

The NDIS will look at the information in your Housing Plan to decide which SDA housing design category will best support your independence, and where you can look for SDA.

SDA payments will appear as a 'capital support' in your NDIS Plan. There will be information explaining the dwelling type, the SDA Design Category and the location funded in your NDIS Plan.

When you have signed a tenancy or occupancy agreement and moved into your SDA property, the NDIS will make SDA payments directly to the provider of the SDA.

## What if the NDIS decides you are not eligible for SDA payments?

The NDIS is a new scheme, and SDA payments are a new way of funding housing. The NDIS is still working out who is eligible.

At your plan review, the NDIS may decide that you are not eligible for SDA. Instead of SDA payments, you may get capacity building funding to increase your independent living skills and your ability to live in mainstream housing.

If you believe that you need SDA, you can ask the NDIS to review its decision within 90 days of the date of the decision. The process is explained here: [🌐 ndis.gov.au/participants/reasonable-and-necessary-supports/decision-review/application-review-reviewable-decision](https://www.ndis.gov.au/participants/reasonable-and-necessary-supports/decision-review/application-review-reviewable-decision)

There are a number of organisations that can help you through the process of having your SDA eligibility reviewed. Use this Disability Advocacy Finder to search services near you:

[🌐 disabilityadvocacyfinder.dss.gov.au/disability/ndap/](https://disabilityadvocacyfinder.dss.gov.au/disability/ndap/)



## PART 2: TYPES OF SDA

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SDA is for people who have an extreme functional impairment or very high support needs. But the type of housing that will suit a person depends on their individual impairment or support needs, so the NDIS has decided on five different types of SDA – called SDA Design Categories. They are:

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

If the NDIS decides that you are eligible for SDA payments, your NDIS Plan will say which SDA Design Category, building type and location you have been funded for.

You should look for housing that matches the SDA Design Category that you have been funded for.

### SDA Design Category – Basic

#### WHO IS IT FOR?

Is for existing housing only and is provided to participants who want to remain in their current group home

#### SPECIALIST DESIGN FEATURES:

Basic housing does not include special design features, but its location or other features may assist with the delivery of specialist support services for people with disability.



## SDA Design Category – Improved Liveability Housing

### WHO IS IT FOR?

People with a sensory, intellectual or cognitive impairment

### SPECIALIST DESIGN FEATURES:

- Easy to enter and move around in
- Doorways and other features are easy to see
- Good visibility from one room to the next
- Easily adapted to suit individual needs
- Meets Livable Housing Australia 'Silver' standard

## SDA Design Category – Fully Accessible Housing

### WHO IS IT FOR?

People who have a significant physical impairment such as wheelchair users

### SPECIALIST DESIGN FEATURES (FOR MOTORISED WHEELCHAIR USERS):

- No steps at external doors and external outdoor private areas
- Bathroom vanity/hand basin accessible in seated or standing position
- Power supply to doors and windows (blinds), for retrofit of automation as necessary
- Consideration given to making the kitchen sink, cooktop, meal preparation bench area and key appliances (dishwasher, oven, microwave oven, laundry appliances) accessible in seated or standing position
- Meets Livable Housing Australia's 'Platinum' standard



## SDA Design Category – Robust Housing

### WHO IS IT FOR?

People who have complex behaviours, and who may sometimes be a risk to themselves or others

### SPECIALIST DESIGN FEATURES:

- Adequate space and safeguards for the needs of residents with complex behaviours, to reduce the risk of residents hurting themselves or others
- Secure windows and doors to and within all areas
- Impact-resistant walls, fittings and fixtures (e.g. blinds, door handles)
- Appropriate sound proofing, to minimise the amount of noise passing from one area to another
- Laminated glass
- Areas of egress and retreat for staff and other residents to avoid harm if required
- Meets Livable Housing Australia 'Silver' standard

## SDA Design Category – High Physical Support

### WHO IS IT FOR?

People with significant physical impairment and who need a high level of personal support

### SPECIALIST DESIGN FEATURES:

- No steps at external doors and external outdoor private areas
- Bathroom vanity/hand basin accessible in seated or standing position
- Power supply to doors and windows (blinds), for retrofit of automation as necessary
- Consideration given to making the kitchen sink, cooktop, meal preparation bench area and key appliances (dishwasher, oven, microwave oven, laundry appliances) 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 residents is at risk
- 950mm minimum clear opening width doors to all habitable rooms
- Meets Livable Housing Australia 'Platinum' standard

For more information, see Livable Housing Australia's Livable Housing Design Guidelines (third edition): [www.livablehousingaustralia.org.au](http://www.livablehousingaustralia.org.au)

## Building Types

If you are eligible for SDA, your NDIS Plan will probably say what building type you have been funded for. There are four types of building that can be SDA:

### APARTMENT

Apartments are self-contained units that are part of a larger residential building. Apartments are typically built above or below another dwelling. Self-contained dwellings that are separated from other dwellings by walls alone are not apartments but are likely to be a villa, duplex or townhouse.

### VILLA, DUPLEX OR TOWNHOUSE

Villas, duplexes and townhouses are dwellings for one, two or three residents, which are generally separate but semi-attached properties within a single title or strata-titled land area. Dwellings are separated by a fire-resistant wall (fire-resistance isn't required for existing housing).

Each villa, duplex or townhouse must have a separate and reasonably accessible entry, and residents must only be able to enter one dwelling by exiting another (restricted internal access between dwellings may be provided for support staff only).

This building type also includes additional dwellings that are located on the same parcel of land as another dwelling (e.g. fully self-contained 'granny flats').



## HOUSE

Houses are detached, low-rise dwellings with garden or courtyard areas.

To be a house (rather than a villa/duplex/townhouse), the dwelling must be located on a separate piece of land and must not share a wall, roof, entry area, driveway, car parking or outdoor area with any dwelling other than an additional villa/townhouse/duplex with no more than one resident. A house is not to have more than two ancillary villa/duplex/townhouses (otherwise the primary dwelling is likely to be considered a villa/townhouse/duplex). Each house must have a land area that is commensurate with the number of residents and in keeping with similar properties in the neighbourhood.

## GROUP HOME

The description of a house above also applies to group homes. Group homes are different from other houses because more people live in them (often four or five long-term residents).

## Location

If you are eligible for SDA, your NDIS Plan may say where the SDA you have been funded for is located. Your plan may refer to the address of an SDA property, or to the NDIS region it is located in.

The regions used by the NDIS can be seen on this map: [stat.abs.gov.au/itt/r.jsp?ABSMaps](https://stat.abs.gov.au/itt/r.jsp?ABSMaps) – from the drop-down menu, choose '2016 Statistical Area Level 4 (SA4)'.



# PART 3: MAKING THE MOST OF SDA PAYMENTS

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If SDA payments are included in your NDIS Plan, you can think about:

- Looking for a vacancy in SDA that is already built
- Finding out whether SDA payments could provide you with a pathway to home ownership
- Joining a cooperative who are building SDA, to ensure you have secure long term housing
- Talking to registered SDA providers and developers about whether they can work with you to build housing for you

## Finding suitable SDA

The SDA payments system is new, so it will take time for new SDA to be built and registered with the NDIS.

### **'IN-KIND' SDA OPTIONS**

In the NDIS, some SDA, including many group houses, are provided 'in-kind' by state and territory governments – this means that the government has already paid for the housing.

Your Housing Plan helps determine what housing type and SDA Design Category you are eligible for. If there are in-kind SDA vacancies available in your housing type and category, the NDIS can encourage you to take these options. If no in-kind options of that type and category are available, you can choose a different option.



If you are funded for in-kind SDA, it's possible that you may have concerns relating to:

- The housing design
- Condition
- Location
- Other residents
- Access to community supports and family supports
- The way the house is operated and managed

You can't be forced to live in in-kind SDA housing. If you have concerns about the in-kind SDA you have been funded for, you may want to ask the NDIS to review its decision. The process is explained here: [🌐 \*\*ndis.gov.au/participants/reasonable-and-necessary-supports/decision-review/application-review-reviewable-decision\*\*](https://www.ndis.gov.au/participants/reasonable-and-necessary-supports/decision-review/application-review-reviewable-decision)

There are a number of organisations that can help you through the process of asking the NDIS to review its decision: [🌐 \*\*disabilityadvocacyfinder.dss.gov.au/disability/ndap/\*\*](https://disabilityadvocacyfinder.dss.gov.au/disability/ndap/)

If you are currently living in aged care and want to live in the community, but are being told to accept a vacancy in an existing group home and you would prefer not to, please contact the Summer Foundation to discuss your options – phone 03 9894 7006.

## What to look for in SDA

1. The owner of the property must be a registered provider with the NDIS.
2. The owner of the property must be managing any potential or actual conflicts of interest (see page 7 for more information).
3. The property must meet relevant design requirements and be enrolled as SDA with the NDIS.
4. The property you move into must match the dwelling type, design features and location funded in your NDIS Plan.



## Tenancy and service agreements

Your SDA provider will work with you to write a contract about your housing and the type, quality and price of housing supports they will provide, including 'terms and conditions' (rules that you agree on). This is called a tenancy or occupancy agreement.

If you will be living in a group home and/or the 'Core Funding' in your NDIS Plan is through a quote for 'Supported Independent Living', you will need to enter into a separate service agreement with your Supported Independent Living provider.

Supports must be provided to you as described in your service agreement. Your providers must provide you with regular statements that list the services they delivered and the amounts charged for those services.

If you are managing your own NDIS funding, your service agreements must say how much you will pay for each support, when they will be delivered and how you'll pay for them.

Service agreements must also describe how problems or complaints will be worked out.

## Conflicts of interest

When doing something for someone else, if a person gets something for themselves if they do it in a certain way, they might be tempted to do what is best for them instead of what is best for the person they are supposed to be helping. This is called a conflict of interest.

Your providers must act in a way that is best for you, and give you the information you need to make good decisions about your housing.



## MANAGING ACTUAL OR PERCEIVED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

NDIS registered providers must take steps to manage possible and actual conflicts of interest, including by developing policies (fixed ways of doing things that are written down). These policies must say how the provider will:

- make sure that they don't limit your choice and control
- manage and let everyone involved know about any particular conflicts of interest as they come up, and
- make sure that advice to you about support options – including any that are not delivered directly by the provider – is clear and 'maximises your choice and control' (makes it as easy as possible for you to understand and make good choices).

Your providers must also make sure that all NDIS participants are treated equally.

## How much rent will I pay in SDA?

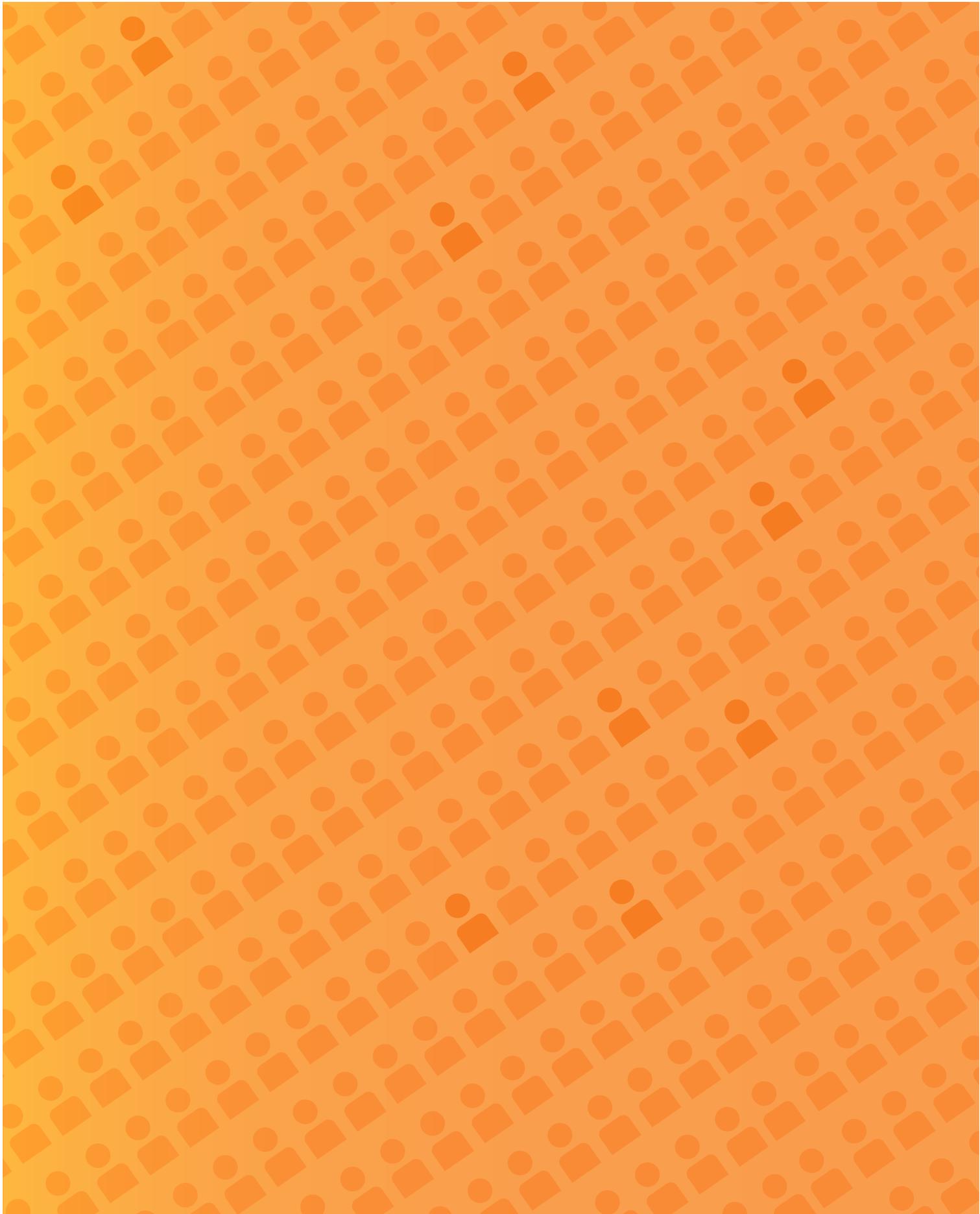
As an SDA tenant, you must pay a 'reasonable rent contribution' to the property owner, which is:

- 25% of your Disability Support Pension, plus
- 100% of your Commonwealth Rent Assistance

## Owning your own SDA property

NDIS participants and their families can build or purchase SDA and register as providers with the NDIS. You can live in SDA with your partner and/or children, but not your parents.

If you want to build and/or own your own SDA, it's important to get specialist advice.



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