



I CAN Online

Request for support

I CAN NETWORK LTD



Founded in 2013, the I CAN Network is Australia's largest provider of Autistic-led group mentoring programs, training and consultancy.

As a not-for-profit organisation, we are dedicated to all autistic young people having I CAN available to them, for their connection and confidence.

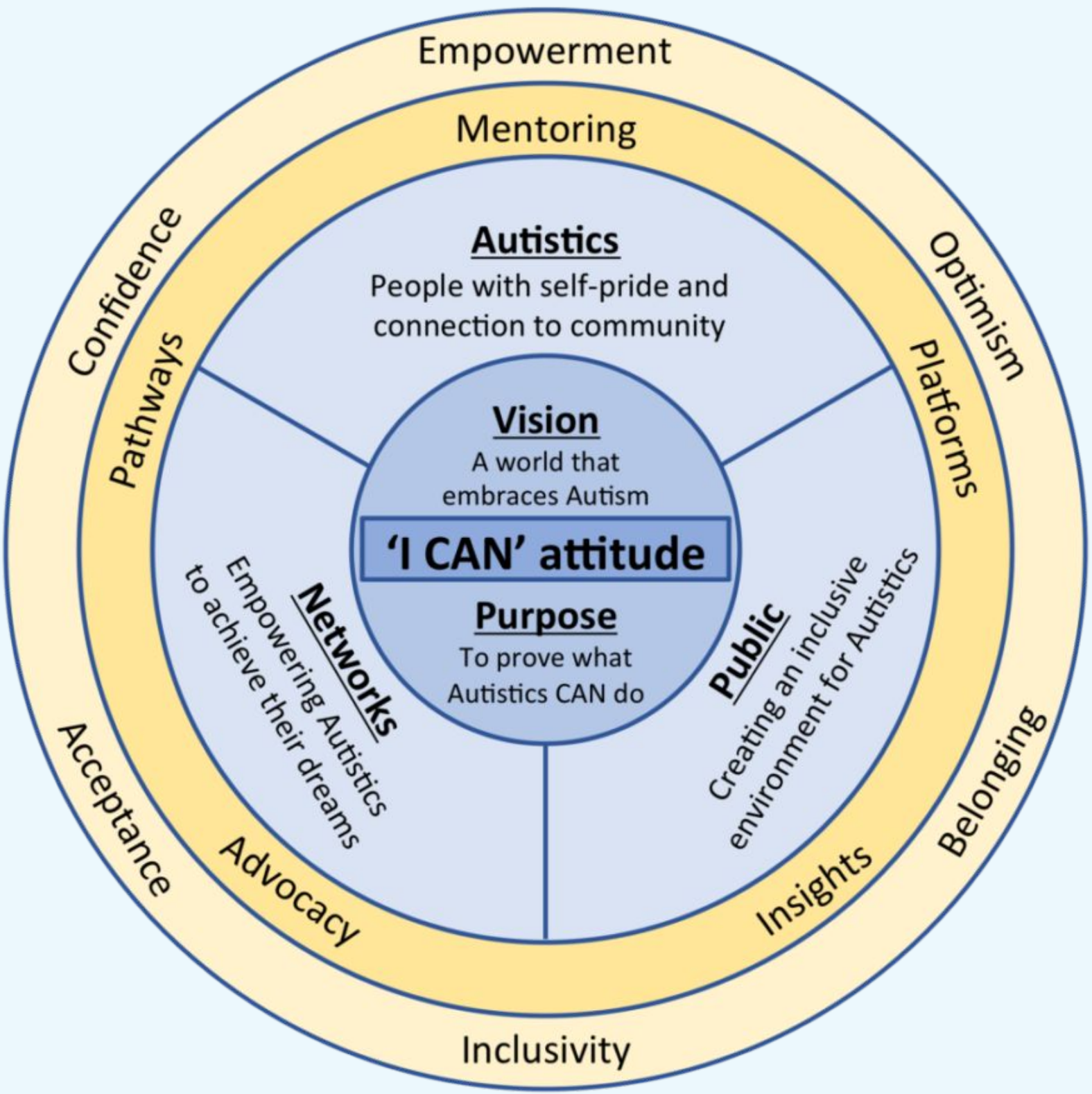
Our commitment to an autistic-led approach is so deep that Goal One of our strategy is to grow I CAN with a 50% difference: a minimum of half of our staff must be autistic.

I CAN's knowledge of autistic young people, schools and mentoring practice has enabled us to achieve widespread influence across the landscape of inclusive education and employment and authentic representation.

I CAN is an ongoing member of the Victorian Government's Autism Education Advisory Group, Autism Plan Advisory Group, Disability Inclusion Advisory Group, the Australian Association for Special Education, the Child Rights NGO Taskforce and the Australian Autism Alliance.



THE 'I CAN' ATTITUDE – OUR APPROACH



Many of the young people who are new to our mentoring programs join us with a sense of shame around being autistic. Too often, they have internalised the negative perceptions of others and the deficits-based view of autism.

At I CAN, we believe in a rethink of Autism that moves young people from a mindset of 'I CAN'T' to 'I CAN.' We do this through respectful, peer-based programs that celebrate autistic strengths, passions and shared experiences.

Since our launch in September 2013, we have helped thousands of autistic young people develop a stronger sense of self-acceptance, confidence, optimism and belonging. In the process, we are demonstrating the high level of innovation and positive social change that comes from valuing autistic insights and talent.

It's not just our autistic mentees and mentors who benefit from our strengths-based approach to autism and neurodiversity. Every day, we see more and more people embracing our hopeful, respectful rethink of autism.

WHO WE ARE AS AN ORGANISATION IN 2025



We significantly expanded our workforce in 2024, now boasting over 100 staff, 83 of whom are autistic.

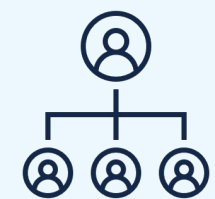
Our team is largely casual and highly distributed, with around 77% identifying as autistic or neurodivergent, ensuring that our programs are led by individuals with lived experience.

In the past year alone, I CAN has mentored more than 3,000 Autistic kids, teenagers and young adults.

The Victorian Government, as a key partner, has committed a total of \$5.1 million across 2024 – 2027 to the I CAN Network through the Victorian Common Funding Agreement (VCFA) to expand I CAN's online and in-person school mentoring programs. This was building on the success of the initial tranche of I CAN's expansion, which was also supported by the government from 2020 to 2023.



WHAT MAKES I CAN DISTINCT AND SPECIAL?



Autistic-led

We are founded and led by Chris Varney, an Autistic law graduate and a pioneer of Autistic-led service provision.



Mentorship Matching

Participants are thoughtfully paired with mentors, ensuring meaningful and tailored support.



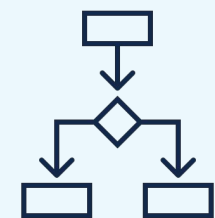
Purpose-Driven Partnerships

We are backed by strategic partnerships with government and sector leaders.



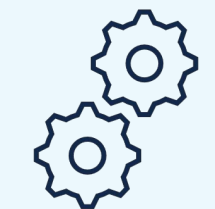
Deep experience

With over a decade of experience, we've refined our approach to deliver high-quality programs consistently.



Strong outcomes

Participants report high satisfaction and strong outcomes—validated by independent and internal evaluations which support the refinement of program logics and content.



Scalable systems

Powered by robust systems like Salesforce and Skedulo, we're ready to grow without compromising quality.



Championing neurodiverse employment

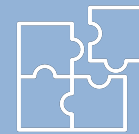
As a leading employer of autistic people (currently 77%), we embed lived experience in every part of our work, demonstrating the benefits of a neurodiverse workforce.

I CAN'S PROGRAMS



I CAN School® mentoring program

A series of 8 x 1-hour group mentoring sessions held in schools delivered in person and virtually. I CAN School® includes the Imagination Club® for primary school students, a transition program (for students transitioning from grade 6 to year 7) and a secondary school program.



I CAN School® enabling programs

Disability Inclusion Ambassador Program

Involves I CAN Network staff giving presentations to school audiences to improve understanding about autism and neurodivergence. This program is funded by the department until June 2027.

Professional Development program

Aims to build knowledge and awareness about autism and neurodivergence in teachers and school staff at schools of all types.

Supporting resources

A suite of resources for all Victorian government schools (for students, teachers and parents/carers) to equip them with the ability to support inclusion and engagement of autistic/neurodivergent students.



I CAN Online mentoring program

6-week program

A series of 6 x 1-hour mentoring sessions delivered virtually during school terms throughout the year

1 x week program

A series of 6 x 1 hr sessions delivered virtually during school holidays.

Social server programs (weeknight)

2-hour interest group sessions delivered virtually on weeknights

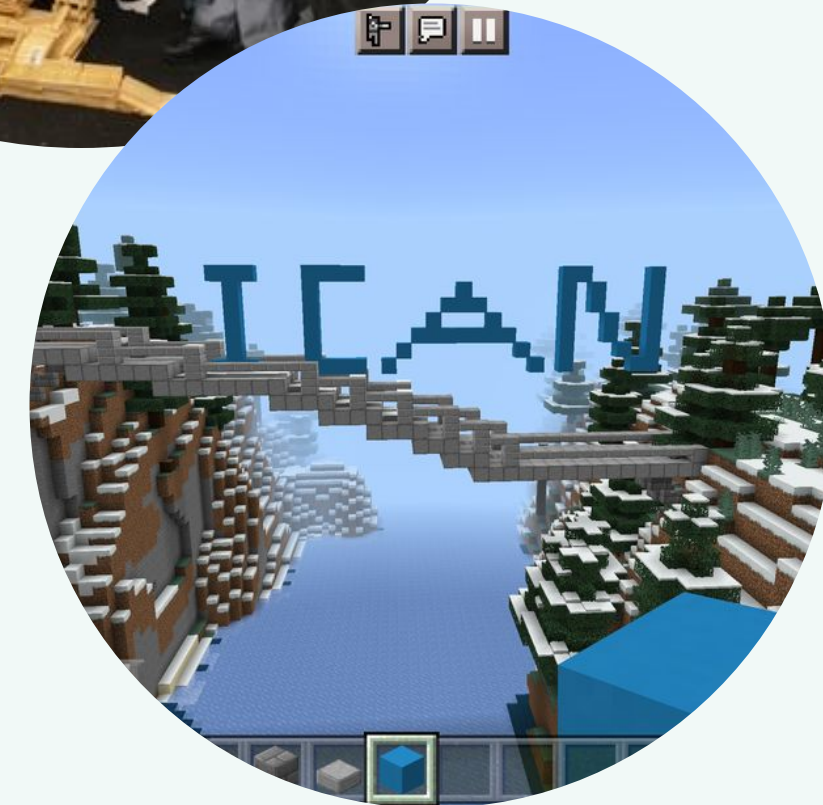
Social server programs (weekend)

2-hour interest group sessions delivered virtually on weekends

THE NEED I CAN ONLINE ADDRESSES



- The number of autistic Australians is increasing – **290,900** autistic Australians in 2022, a **41.8% increase** from the **205,200** Autistic Australians in 2018¹
- As of March 2025, autism is the most common primary disability among NDIS participants — with the highest demand concentrated in NSW, VIC and QLD²:
 - 38% of all participants on the NDIS are autistic and 76% of these participants are between the ages of 0 – 18²
 - NSW, VIC, and QLD have the highest proportion of NDIS participants with autism, collectively accounting for 77% of all NDIS participants with autism².
- Autistic individuals, along with their families, carers, and support networks, often experience disproportionately high rates of social isolation, discrimination, abuse, and violence.
- Several factors contribute to these low rates of social inclusion, including poor employment rates, a lack of community understanding of autism, limited opportunities to participate in the community and build social connections, unaccommodating built environments, issues with access to transport, and low levels of independent living.



¹ ABS 2022 data

² NDIS 2025 data

HOW I CAN ONLINE ADDRESSES THE NEED



- I CAN Network's programs are designed to improve confidence, connection, and inclusion for autistic/neurodivergent young people.
- By addressing these challenges and aligning with the commitments forecast by the National Autism Strategy, I CAN is uniquely positioned to support autistic/neurodivergent young people in achieving a better quality of life and improved living standards. Our unique approach is underpinned by:

1

Mentors with lived experience: Our mentors are individuals who have firsthand experience with autism and neurodivergence. This unique perspective allows them to connect deeply with participants, offering genuine empathy and understanding. Their lived experience enriches the mentoring process, making it more relatable and impactful.

2

Targeted matching of mentors and participants: We carefully match mentors with participants based on their interests, needs and personalities. This targeted approach ensures that each participant receives personalised support and guidance, fostering a stronger mentor-mentee relationship and enhancing the overall effectiveness of the program.

3

Intellectual Property (IP): Our program is built on proprietary methodologies and resources that have been developed and refined over the years. This intellectual property sets us apart from other programs, providing a unique framework that drives successful outcomes for our participants.

4

Quality control measures: To maintain the highest standards of delivery and satisfaction, we implement rigorous quality control measures. These include measures such as limiting each sessions to a maximum of 9 participants. This ensures that each participant receives the adequate attention and support from our mentors.



PROVEN IMPACT AND TRACK RECORD



Average satisfaction towards I CAN Online programs

89%

Young people show improved social connection and positive networks

88%

Young people have gained a positive sense of self

62%

Young people show improved wellbeing, social connection and sense of belonging

71%

Parents reflecting in 2024 after participants attend I CAN Online for 12 months

Increase in social connection

17%

Increase in confidence to communicate

14%

Increase in feeling supported and respected in the group

11%

Increase in self-acceptance

5%

Changes noted among participants compared to pre-program in 2023

¹ [Dashboard - I CAN Network Dashboard - Seer Data](#)

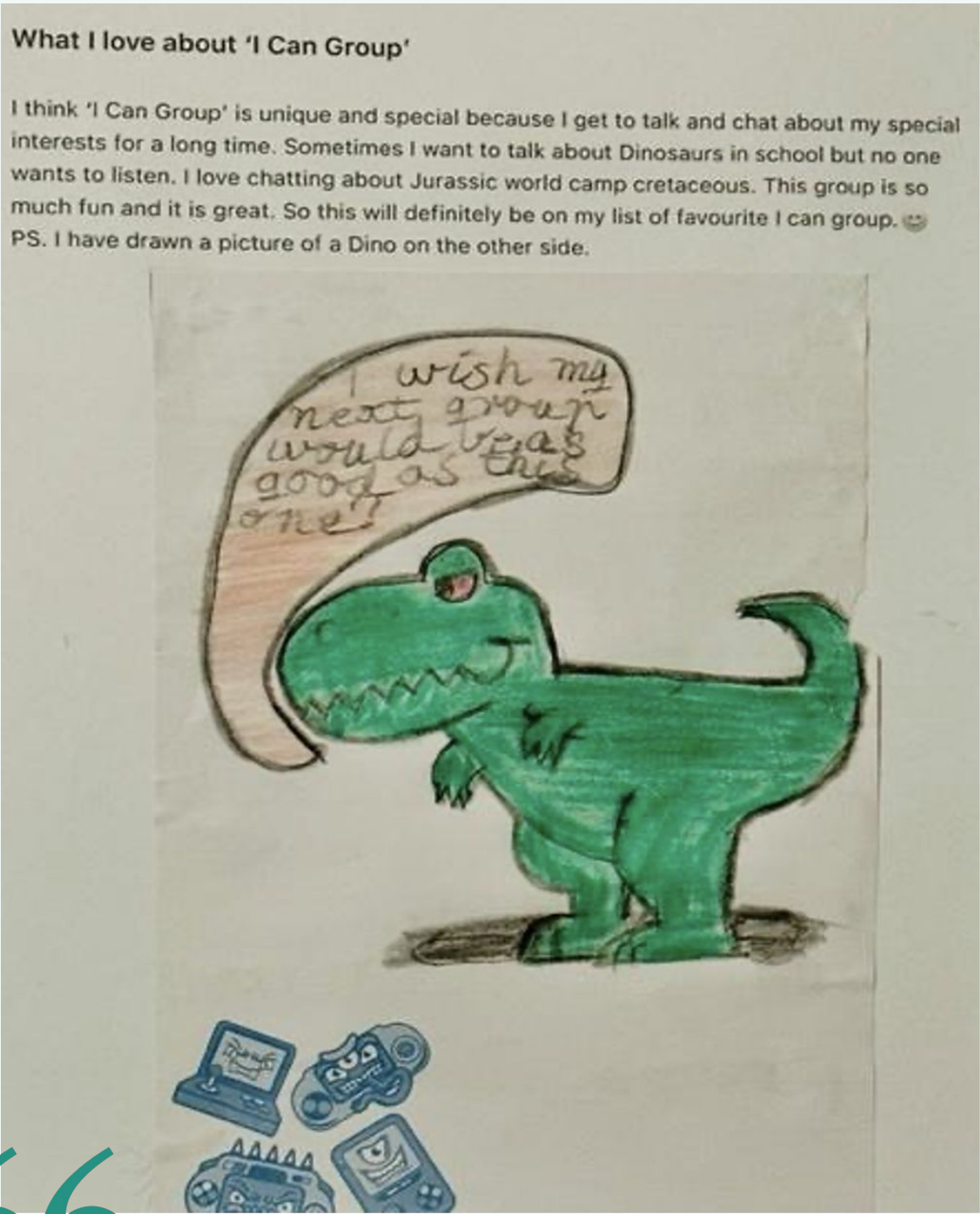
² I CAN Network 2023 - Social Impact Report

PARTICIPANT TESTIMONIALS



Mentees are highly satisfied with I CAN Online because they feel they are in a safe environment where they can be themselves and participate in activities and discussions at a level that feel comfortable to them without feeling labelled or judged.

*“I can be myself
I can be happy
I can be included
I can be accepted
I can be free of judgement,
I can make friends
I can fit in,
I can be not instantly
labelled,
I can have fun in a
like-minded
Community”*

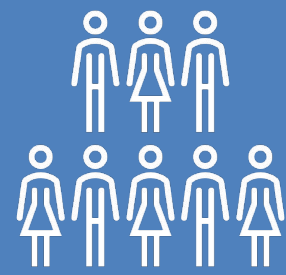


I CAN ONLINE'S REACH

We are the only provider of mentoring programs across Australia that is both autistic-led and actively employing autistic staff.



New participants



We have reached over 1,900 new participants nationally over the past three years.

Geography



Majority of I CAN Online participants are based out of VIC followed by NSW and QLD.

Program engagement



We have achieved over 5400 program engagements across the past three years.



Age



58% of participants are between the ages of 10 – 14, 20% of participants are between the ages of 5-9 and 15-19.

Mental Health



Most of our participants have co-occurring conditions—commonly anxiety (80%), ADHD (57%), depression (22%) and suicidal thoughts (11%).

Remoteness



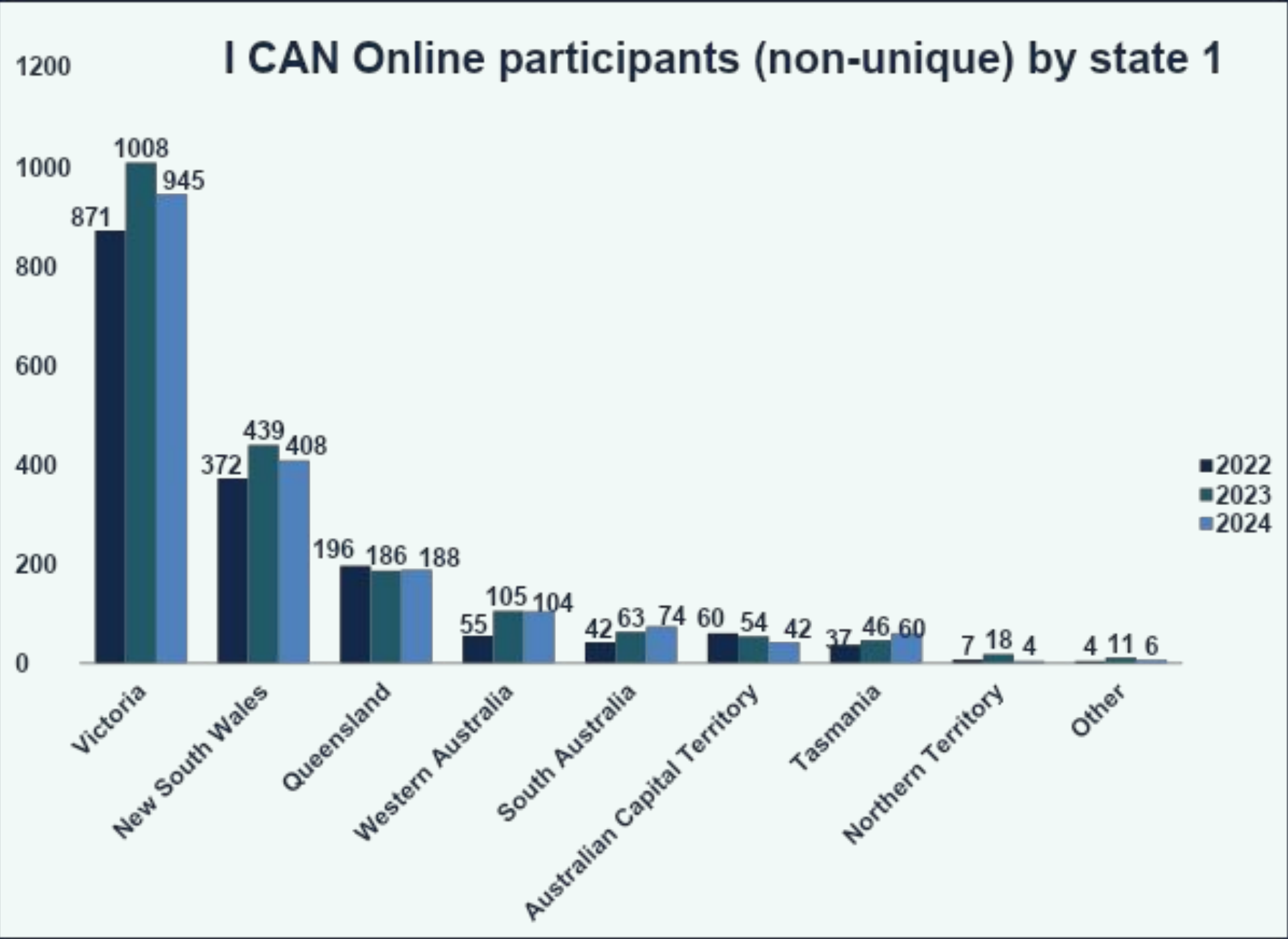
Majority of participants are based in metropolitan areas, with consistent representation in regional areas across the years.

¹ I CAN Network 2023 - Social Impact Report

² I CAN Online participant data – 2022 -2024

CURRENT REACH VS NATIONAL DEMAND

We’ve established a strong market presence in Victoria and the data shows significant potential to expand I CAN Online in the other states



¹ I CAN Online participant data – 2022 -2024

² NDIS data - 2025

NDIS Autism population data, by State ²				
State/Territory	Autism	All participants	Percentage of all participants with autism	Percentage of all participants
NSW	78,500	211,994	29%	30%
VIC	70,477	192,973	26%	27%
QLD	61,496	154,686	22%	22%
WA	24,954	62,955	9%	9%
SA	27,001	60,859	10%	8%
TAS	5,770	15,332	2%	2%
NT	1,605	6,410	1%	1%
ACT	4,510	11,693	2%	2%
OT	36	75	0%	0%
Missing	11	24	0%	0%
Total	274,360	717,001	100%	100%

VISION FOR SCALING I CAN ONLINE



All autistic young people in Australia have I CAN® available to them, for their connection and confidence

SCALING OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Reach more autistic young people across Australia through I CAN Online
 - Grow awareness of I CAN's online offerings nationally
 - Grow I CAN Online's footprint outside of Victoria
- ✓ Strengthen I CAN's capacity to scale through investments into additional roles and technology
- ✓ Develop and rollout new products such as professional development programs for educators

SCALING TIME HORIZONS



CEO & Founder **Chris Varney**

STRATEGIC RATIONALE FOR SCALING

External factors

Unmet need nationwide, as evidenced by NDIS data on Autism

Alignment with priorities and commitments within the National Autism Strategy

Our offering is unique in the market



Internal factors

Tried and tested product with demonstrated impact

Strong foundations to scale –technology base, mentors and IP

Potential to be self-sustaining with the right supporting investments

Existing IP can be leveraged for future innovation

CONTACT US



- Please contact Chris Varney at chris@icannetwork.com.au if you would like to discuss investment options for I CAN Online

