



I CAN NETWORK 2024 - 2025

ANNUAL REPORT





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY / LIVED EXPERIENCE

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands across this country, whose culture is the oldest living culture in human history.

We pay respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present. We recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community, and we acknowledge that First Nations sovereignty was never ceded; it always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

We also recognise the Autistic and neurodivergent communities who, through their lived experience, help to develop and guide the services and resources produced by I CAN Network Ltd.



Artwork by Narmi Collins-Widders, a proud Aboriginal artist from the Anaiwan Nation and student participant in our 2020 Expo.

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WHO WE ARE

Founded in 2013, we are proud to be **Australia's largest provider of Autistic-led group mentoring programs, training and consultancy.**

In the past year alone, we have provided **Autistic-led peer support to more than 3000 Autistic young people** across Australia through our neuro-affirming, evidence-based group mentoring programs.

As a not-for-profit organisation, we are dedicated to making I CAN® programs available to all Autistic young people for their **connection** and **confidence**.

As a leading employer of Autistic people, we embed Autistic lived experience in every part of our work and demonstrate the benefits of a neurodiverse workforce.

Our deep knowledge of Autistic young people, schools and mentoring practice – coupled with **respectful collaboration** with diverse partners – allows us to achieve **widespread influence** across the landscape of inclusive education, 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, the Australian Autism Alliance and is registered with the Workplace Gender Equality Agency.

OUR PURPOSE

To prove what Autistics CAN do.

We enable.

We actively remove barriers, accommodate individual needs and embrace diversity to ensure everyone can participate fully.

We are open.

Flexibility and continuous growth are central to our work.

We are gutsy.

We push ourselves to grow, but not to breaking point.

We are positive.

We focus on strengths and believe in the potential of every individual.

We value integrity.

We are honest, transparent and accountable in all that we do.

We build networks.

We work at the grassroots level to grow strong, supportive local communities.

These values drive our programs and partnerships, helping us build a more inclusive world where Autistic people are understood, respected and celebrated.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is designed to give our stakeholders an insight into the services delivered by I CAN Network Ltd.

THE I CAN DIFFERENCE

Since 2013, we've been unwavering in our purpose: proving what Autistics CAN do.

What makes I CAN different from most organisations in Australia is that Autistic people are at the centre of the design, delivery and continual enhancement of our programs.

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 deficit-based view of autism that is still too prevalent in our society.

At I CAN, we champion a rethink of autism that moves young people from a mindset of 'I CAN'T' to 'I CAN.' Our mentoring sessions build the confidence of Autistic young people by immersing them in an environment of safety, trust and belief.

Each year, we empower thousands of Autistic young people to develop a stronger sense of self-acceptance, optimism and belonging that comes from having positive peer support.

In the process, we showcase the high level of innovation and social change that comes from valuing Autistic lived experience. It's not just our participants and our mentors who benefit from our strengths-based approach. Every day, we see more and more people embracing our hopeful, respectful rethink of autism.



OUR DISTINCTIVENESS

Autistic-Led: Founded and led by Chris Varney, an Autistic law graduate and pioneer of Autistic-led service provision, we are the only national provider of peer mentoring programs that is both Autistic-led and predominantly Autistic-staffed.

Championing Autistic Employment: As a leading employer of Autistic people, with 83 Autistic staff, we are committed to providing meaningful career opportunities within an inclusive workplace that celebrates Autistic talent.

Program Innovation: We are a pioneer and national leader in designing and providing neuro-affirming peer support programs for Autistic young people across school-based and online settings.

Strong Outcomes: Our participants report high levels of satisfaction and impact from our programs – outcomes that are validated by independent and internal evaluations that support the refinement of our program logic and content.

A Trusted Partner: Our expertise and close working partnerships with community groups, government, and sector leaders make us a valuable collaborator and a trusted voice across the landscape of children's rights, inclusive education and employment.

Deep Experience: With more than a decade of experience, we've refined our approach to consistently deliver high-quality, personalised programs.

Scalable Systems: Powered by robust systems such as Salesforce and Skedulo, we're able to grow without compromising the quality, safety and authenticity of our programs.

CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE



From the first moment I was introduced to the concept behind I CAN in 2015, I became a true believer.

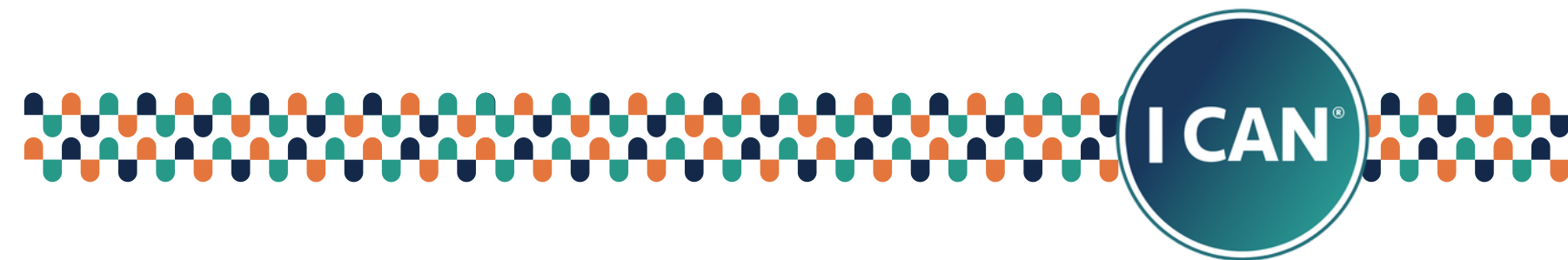
To encourage people to focus on what they can do - rather than what they can't - is such a positive, uplifting idea. It's a simple notion but much harder to convey in a way that feels genuine to Autistic young people and their families.

That's the magic of I CAN's Autistic-led face-to-face and online mentoring programs. Our mentors help them see what is possible.

There's also a very compelling story at I CAN that is taking place behind the scenes. From a Board perspective, one of the most significant achievements of 2024-2025 is the further development of I CAN's management structure. In my experience, it's very common for people to have wonderful ideas for social enterprises and businesses. However, there's a big difference between a great concept and successful implementation, particularly as organisations scale up.

I CAN's growing team - currently at 110 staff members, 83 of whom are Autistic – supports thousands of Autistic young people each year. Administration, accounting, payroll, scheduling programs and reporting can be very complex. I CAN's management team have been particularly effective in developing the structures, formal processes and policies that not only improve the day-to-day operation of the organisation but also provide a solid foundation for future growth.

I am especially excited about the potential of I CAN Online, which can be delivered so widely and cost-effectively. It also allows us to reach young people who may not be comfortable with, or even able to access, in-person peer support.



We know from the testimonials of parents, teachers and, most importantly, participants themselves that our online programs can have a significant impact. We also see a high percentage of young people who participate in multiple cycles because our online groups provide a safe space for connection. The potential for programs like these - within I CAN and beyond our organisation – is endless. We are just starting to scratch the surface of what is possible.

I would like to thank the ongoing non-executive directors Julia Wake (Deputy Chairperson), Anthony Boyle and Ken Murray for their service and the senior leadership team including Chris Varney, Tiffany Mumford, Yvonne Basile and Stacey Leanne.

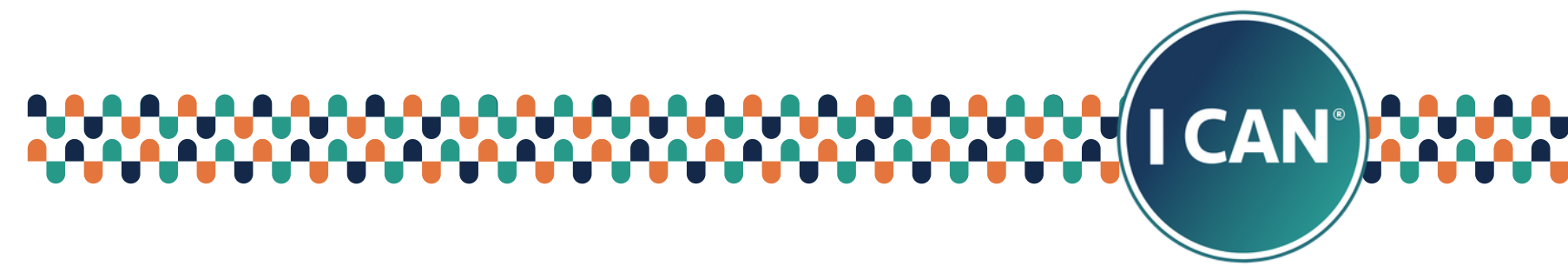
I look forward to I CAN's continued growth in the years to come.

David Legge
Chairperson



(From left to right: Directors Ken Murray (Non-Executive Director and member, Policy Sub-Committee), Julia Wake (Deputy Chairperson and member, Policy Sub-Committee), David Legge (Chairperson and member, Risk Sub-Committee) Anthony Boyle (Non-Executive Director and member, Risk Sub-Committee), and Chris Varney)

CEO'S MESSAGE



Since launching our first school-based group mentoring program in 2014, we have always known that Autistic-led peer support could be a game-changer in how we support Autistic young people. Like me, most of our staff are Autistic or neurodivergent in some other way. We know what it's like to be that young person searching for understanding, acceptance and inclusion.

In the decade that followed, we focused on refining our programs to continually raise overall quality, building our evidence base and pioneering new ways of reaching young people, including I CAN Online, our national online mentoring program.

I want to thank my team for their passion and commitment to creating something extraordinary.

We are very grateful to the Victorian Department of Education for investing in our work since our early days. A four-year expansion plan to bring the I CAN School® program to 4,136 Autistic students across 254 Victorian government schools by the end of FY2027 further validates our model of peer support and building more inclusive school communities. It is a privilege to continue our close collaborative partnership with the Department's Disability Inclusive Education Division as we work towards important shared goals.

The past two years have seen significant changes for I CAN—not because we've wavered from our original values or purpose, but because we have focused on five key pillars that have taken our impact to new heights:



CEO'S MESSAGE

1. **Diversity:** It is important that our programs reflect the Autistic community's vast diversity. In 2024-25, we enhanced our team-wide training to better support participants and teammates with diverse Autistic identities. We also continued to implement a human resources program funded by The Ian Potter Foundation to create more employment opportunities for Autistic school leavers with greater support requirements.

2. **Education Resources:** Our 2024 launch of the [I CAN Education](#) microsite has enabled us to share a suite of co-branded practical tools and resources for neurodivergent students, teachers, school leaders, and parents/carers to support the Victorian Department of Education's Disability Inclusion Reform. These resources, including Australia's first-ever, youth-led *Neurodivergent Students' Guide To Starting High School*, are now embedded in our programs.

3. **Infrastructure:** Our expansion plan with the Victorian Department of Education led us to strengthen our infrastructure. We adopted robust systems such as Salesforce and Skedulo, introduced important HR protocols, including a new child safety policy aligned with national frameworks, and created a capability framework for staff career progression. We are well-positioned for future growth and are proud to serve as model to other organisations that are scaling up.

4. **Evaluation:** In 2024-2025, we enhanced the quality of our work by refining our internal program logic maps, raising the rigour of our internal assessments and acting upon the opportunities highlighted in independent evaluations from the Cube Group and renowned Autistic autism researcher Professor Sandra Thom-Jones. Our ongoing commitment to improvement has led to higher-quality, more responsive programs across the board.

5. **Community Partnerships:** Our vision is a world that embraces autism. We envision an Australia in which all Autistic young people have I CAN available to them, for their connection and confidence. Our purpose is to prove what Autistics CAN do. Partnerships and collaborations are vital to bringing these to life. We deeply appreciate the organisations that have partnered with us to enhance our capabilities and reach, including The Ian Potter Foundation, The Myer Foundation, Future Generation Global, Newsboys Foundation, the Victorian Department of Education and the Federal Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. It is also a privilege to partner with other members of the Autistic, autism and disability communities.

I would like to thank I CAN staff for the ongoing dedication, care and creativity that they bring to their roles, the I CAN Board for their guidance, the I CAN senior leadership team for their energy, professionalism and stewardship and all our supporters and partners for believing in us. On a personal note, I would like to thank my wife Karen and son George, my parents and friends, especially Tim and Alana, for all the reasons they're aware of.

Chris Varney
Founder & Chief Enabling Officer



KEY HIGHLIGHTS 2024 - 2025

5,345 Autistic/neurodivergent young people empowered by our Autistic-led peer mentoring

I CAN Mentoring Programs in
201 Victorian government schools
348 I CAN School® programs delivered to 3,303 Autistic secondary school students

Disability Inclusion Ambassador Program launched

More than 2,600 people reached through presentations by Autistic young adult ambassadors

3,031 I CAN Online spaces offered nationwide

Nearly 4,000 people reached through our Autistic-led professional development sessions

- 88% of teachers who attended feel more confident about their ability to support Autistic students

Expanded the functionality of our CRM, Salesforce, to help us reach more Autistic young people and their families

300 attendees at I CAN Expo, Australia's largest annual event for Autistic youth

Helped influence Australia's historic National Autism Strategy (2025-2031)

83 Autistic staff members employed (77% of team)

- Established trainee program for staff with higher support needs
- Expanded part-time & full-time career pathways

94% job satisfaction rate for I CAN staff

Launched I CAN Education resource microsite

- Released Australia's first-ever *The Neurodivergent Students' Guide To Starting High School*, led by student voices
- **1,147 downloads** of Autistic-led resources and practical tips

OUR IMPACT

AUTISTIC-LED PEER MENTORING

Empowering Autistic young people is at the heart of what we do. Each year, thousands of Autistic young people participate in our peer mentoring programs in schools across Victoria and through our national online program. Autistic mentors on every team foster genuine connection and relatability with participants, who thrive in an accepting space where they do not have to apologise for being themselves. In FY24-FY25, the significant expansion of our school-based programs in Victoria and the addition of new special-interest themes to our national online program brought us closer to our goal: making I CAN peer support available to every Autistic young person who could benefit from it.

We reach young people via three Autistic-led programs:

I CAN School® Program:

This weekly, eight-session program supports Autistic secondary school students in Victoria by bringing them together in a safe, engaging group setting. Students connect with Autistic peers and mentors and participate in activities designed to build self-confidence and self-esteem. Some schools also include students who are neurodivergent in other ways, and our strengths-based content resonates with them as well.

I CAN Imagination Club®:

Our primary school mentoring program supports students with learning differences and social anxiety. As a non-autism-specific program, it engages a broad range of students. I CAN Imagination Club® provides a safe, supportive environment where students are encouraged to recognise and celebrate their strengths. Each session helps students build peer connections, optimism, a sense of belonging and confidence. Over the course of FY24-FY25, 3,303 students from 201 schools participated in I CAN School® and I CAN Imagination Club® Programs.

I CAN Online:

Since 2017, our national online mentoring program has enabled Autistic young people aged 7-22 to explore shared interests with Autistic peers and mentors from home. In a safe, supportive environment where participants are accepted as they are, they build confidence and social connections. Our vision for this program is: *'All Autistic young people have I CAN available to them, for their connection and confidence.'* During FY24 - FY25, 1601 Autistic young people participated nationwide.

Diversity exists in many forms...



No two sea creatures are alike...life here on Earth is *diverse!*

What are some diverse things in nature that you can think of?

INTRODUCING PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TO NEURODIVERSITY

We continually strive to make our programs more relevant to the young people we mentor. Unlike our secondary school groups, which are autism-focused, I CAN Imagination Club® often includes students without formal diagnoses. Our mentors observed that many new participants felt shame about being 'different' from their peers.

In FY2025, we introduced a neurodiversity-themed module to ensure primary school participants receive accurate and affirming messages about autism, ADHD, dyslexia and the broader diversity of human brains. Providing information that explains and validates these differences reduces shame among all students—whether or not they are neurodivergent—and helps them appreciate the strengths that come from all forms of diversity.

OUR IMPACT

CAPACITY BUILDING

Learning directly from Autistic and other neurodivergent individuals is essential for developing more neuro-inclusive mindsets and practices. At I CAN, we complement our Autistic-led peer support with capacity-building programs that enhance knowledge and understanding.

These include:

Professional Development Trainings:

We deliver tailored workshops that draw on our expertise with Autistic young people and our leadership in Autistic employment. These sessions foster understanding and provide practical strategies to create more inclusive classrooms, schoolyards, workplaces and communities. In FY2025, as part of our Victorian expansion, we delivered 81 professional development workshops to help teachers better support Autistic and other neurodivergent students.

Disability Inclusion Ambassadors:

Our Disability Inclusion Ambassador program, established as part of our Victorian expansion, amplifies the voices of Autistic recent school leavers from Victorian government schools. Ambassadors share their experiences with teachers and students to improve understanding of autism and neurodiversity. They also contribute to anti-bullying and inclusion resources and provide a student voice in policy discussions. Over FY24-25, our first two Ambassadors, Rachael Hamilton and Cylan Waldhart, reached more than 2,631 people through their public presentations.

Lived Experience Resources:

We have developed a wide range of resources to empower Autistic young people and the adults who support them. In 2024-2025, in partnership with the Victorian Department of Education, we launched I CAN Education. This microsite features the voices of neurodivergent government school students across Victoria and draws on our team's vast experience of mentoring thousands of Autistic students. It offers resources and practical tips for neurodivergent students, educators and parents/carers to support the Department's Disability Inclusion Reforms.



An Australian First: *The Neurodivergent Students' Guide To Starting High School*

From our team's lived experience, we know that starting high school is a significant transition for Autistic and other neurodivergent students. Developed with the Victorian Department of Education, this graphic novel guide was led by Autistic/multiply neurodivergent young adult mentors and draws upon the content from our Year 7 transition to high school program.

Written from the perspective of 'What we wish we had known when we were starting Year 7', the guide provides practical tips, encouragement and reassurance from mentors who understand. The guide has been widely shared across Australia, with 7,600+ views and 1,250+ downloads since its release in December 2024.

OUR IMPACT THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

As Australia's largest Autistic-led and predominantly Autistic-staffed organisation, we are committed to leading positive social change for the Autistic and autism communities. We understand the barriers Autistic young people face in education and the challenges Autistic adults encounter in employment. We also recognise what is required to make schools, workplaces and society safer and more inclusive for Autistic people.

We are proud to be a leader in key arenas:

Employment

Autistic adults face significantly higher rates of unemployment and under-employment than the general population. A key distinguishing feature of I CAN – and a source of enormous strength – is our commitment to ensuring that at least 50% of our team are Autistic, a benchmark that we continue to exceed. **In FY24-FY25, Autistic staff made up 77% of our neurodiverse team**, including first-time job seekers as well as staff with more complex needs. We also employ a number of Autistic and non-Autistic parents of Autistic young people. All of our roles are paid positions and we offer ongoing training, career development opportunities and support. We also advise organisations seeking to make their workplaces more neuro-inclusive.

Partnerships

We prioritise partnerships with organisations committed to empowering Autistic people. Our longstanding collaborations span the non-profit, public and private sectors. In FY24-FY25, these partnerships enabled us to dramatically expand our presence in Victorian government schools, increase employment opportunities for Autistic adults, host the nation's largest event for Autistic youth, and make critical infrastructure investments that will allow us to support more Autistic young people nationwide.

Policy Influence & Advocacy

We support policymakers and leaders in creating more inclusive schools, workplaces and communities for Autistic people. Our team actively participates in advisory groups, prepares detailed policy submissions, and serves in advisory roles with state and federal governments. For example, we sit on the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing's Autism Plan Advisory Group, the Victorian Department of Education's Autism Education Strategy Advisory Group and Disability Inclusion Advisory Group and the Australian Autism Alliance.



History-Making: The National Autism Strategy (2025-2031)

We are proud to have contributed to the historic National Autism Strategy. The Government developed this strategy through extensive consultation with the Autistic community. I CAN participated as both Australia's largest Autistic-led service provider and as an active member of the Australian Autism Alliance, the national peak body advancing the rights and interests of Autistic people, their families and carers.

The Government's investment in Autistic-led peer support, informed by evidence-based practices from organisations such as I CAN, will strengthen social connection and wellbeing for many Autistic people across Australia.

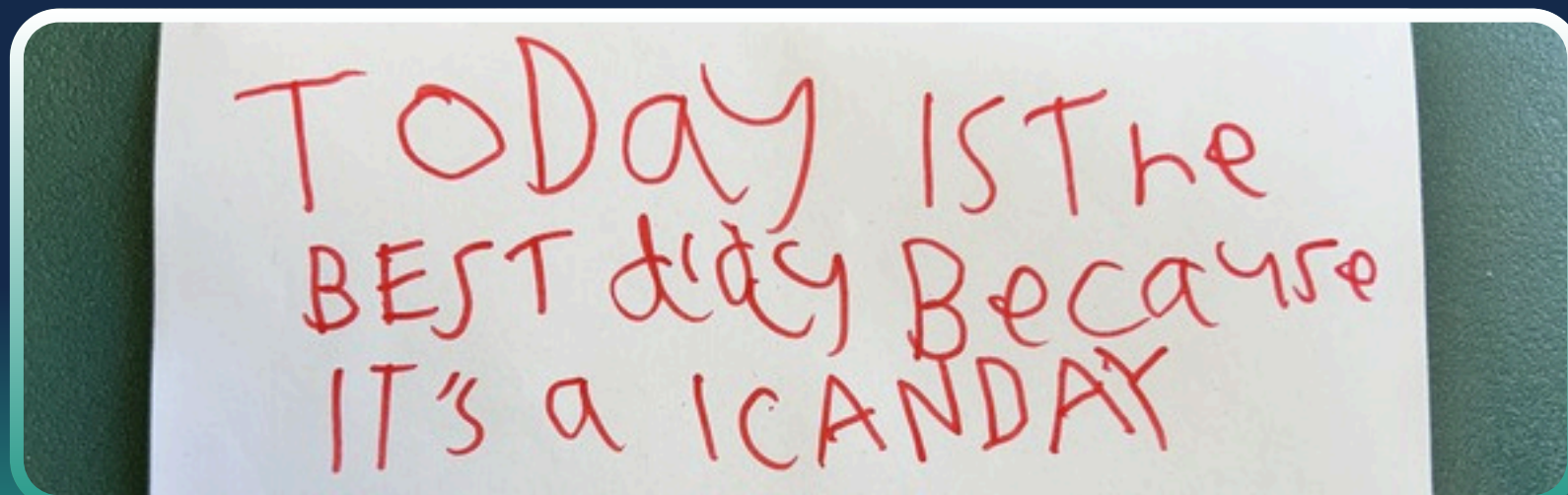
A CLOSER LOOK: VICTORIAN EXPANSION

A significant milestone for our Autistic-led peer mentoring programs is the \$5.7 million, four-year funding agreement (FY2024–FY2027) with the Victorian Department of Education to support the Disability Inclusion Reform, aligning with the Autism Education Strategy by increasing the availability of peer-led mentoring programs to:

- Support the wellbeing and connection of Autistic/neurodivergent students attending Victorian Government schools; and
- Enhance the ability of teachers and support staff to understand the needs of their Autistic students and access effective support strategies.

The expansion includes:

- **I CAN School® programs:** Autistic-led group mentoring for primary students and secondary students held in partner schools (delivered in-person or virtually), complemented by a suite of ‘**enabling**’ programs to deepen knowledge and offer tools for supporting Autistic/neurodivergent students; and
- **I CAN Online:** Autistic-led group mentoring sessions held outside of the school setting.



I CAN SCHOOL® AND I CAN IMAGINATION CLUB® MENTORING PROGRAMS

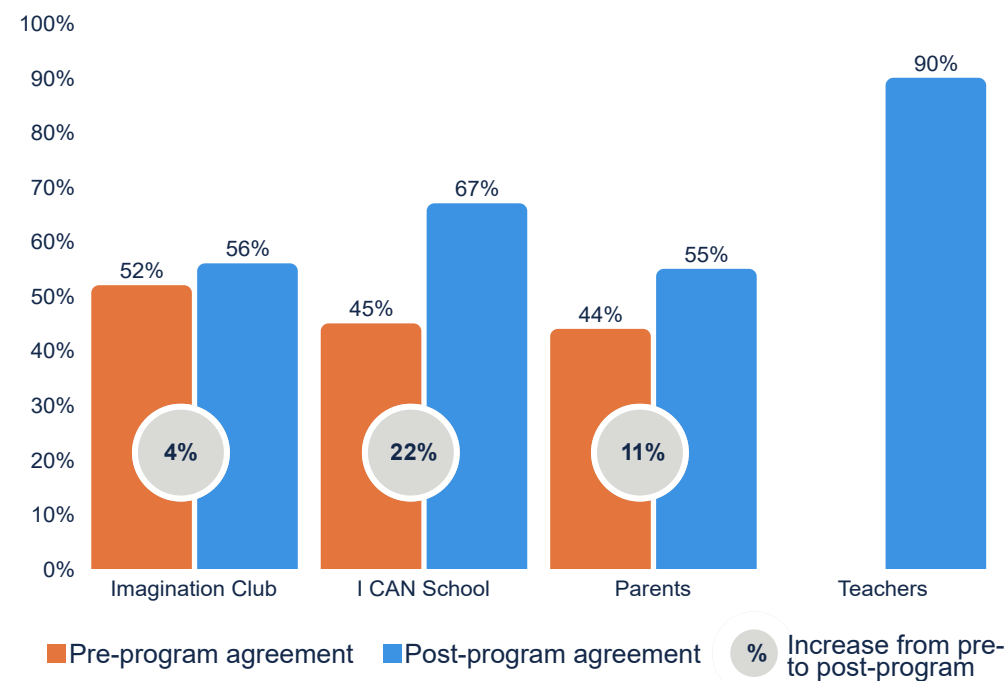
The expansion plans set forth a goal of growing I CAN School® programs to 254 Victorian Government schools by FY2027, engaging 4,316 Autistic students. In the first two years of this expansion, we have exceeded original yearly estimates by a wide margin:

- I CAN originally estimated that 120 school programs would be delivered by the end of FY 2025. **We exceeded the original estimate by 25% and delivered programs to 162 schools**, including a strong presence in regional schools.
- At the close of FY2025, I CAN had signed agreements with **201 Victorian government schools** (79% of our total expansion goal).
- In the first two years of expansion, we have already reached **3,303 unique students** (80% of our expansion target).

In 2025, new evaluation surveys were introduced to align with the updated I CAN program logic and support Cube Group’s independent evaluation. Revised pre- and post-program surveys were implemented for participants, parents/carers, and teachers and support staff who supervised program sessions.

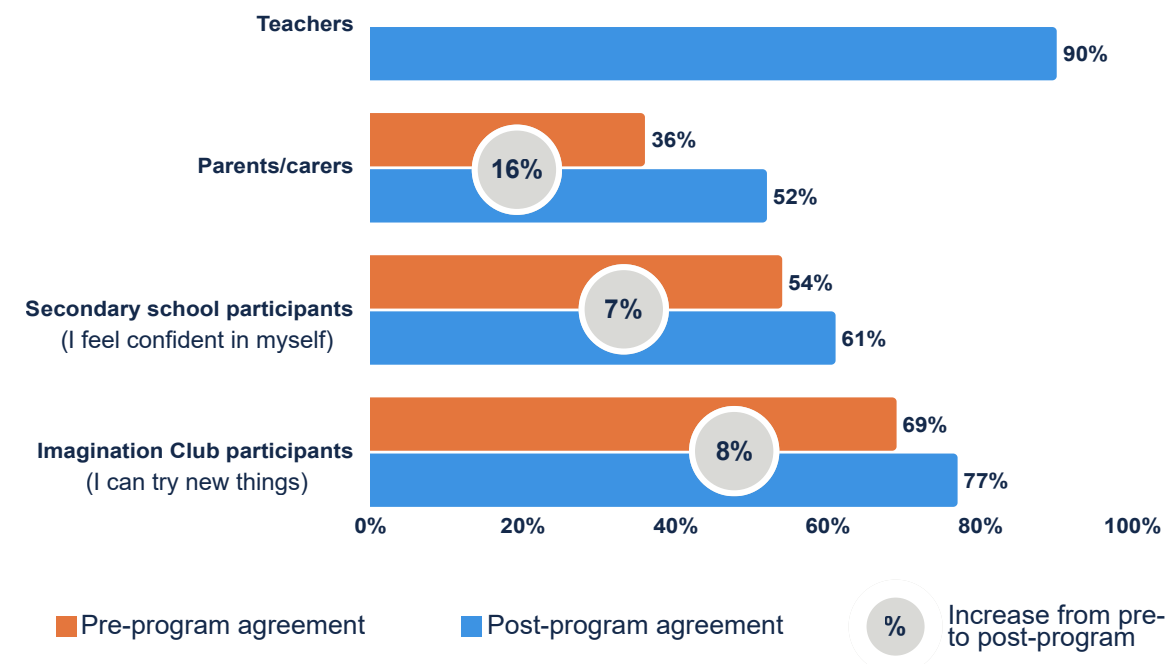
I CAN evaluation data, corroborated by qualitative input from the Cube Group's independent evaluation, showed progress against all short-term outcomes for students, including, but not limited to, increased social connectivity, increased confidence and increased self-acceptance.

Figure 1: Levels of agreement on participants' connection with other students



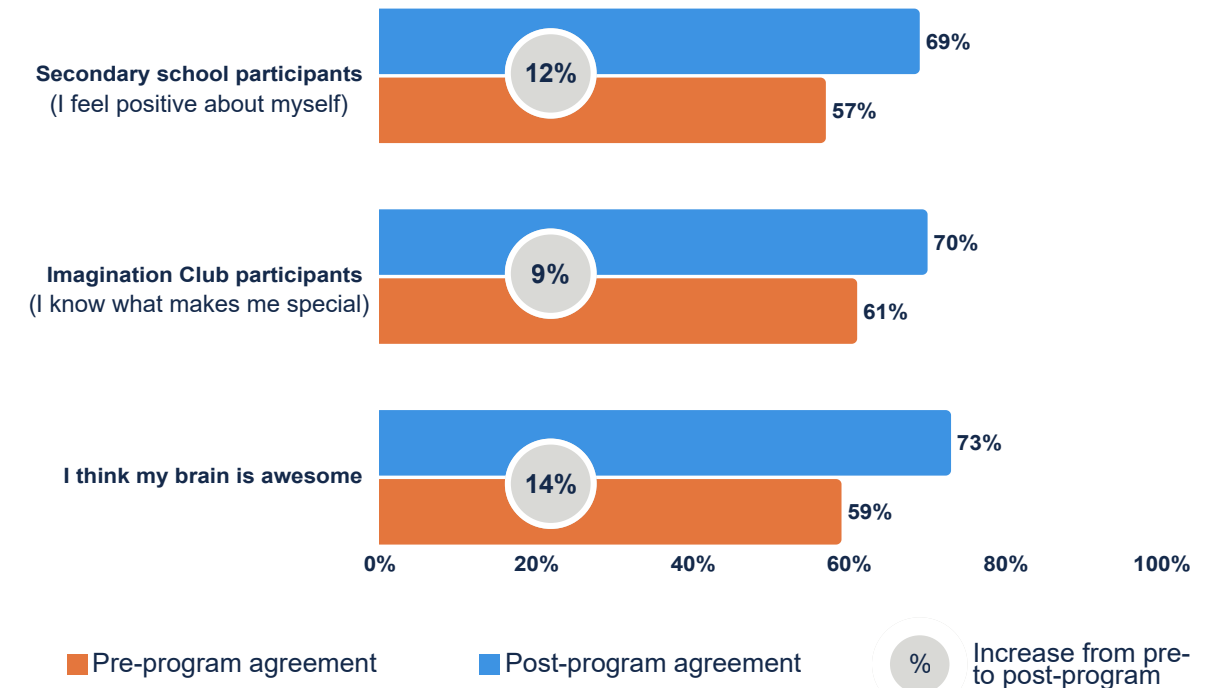
Note: only post-program survey data was collected from teachers.

Figure 2: Levels of agreement on participants' confidence



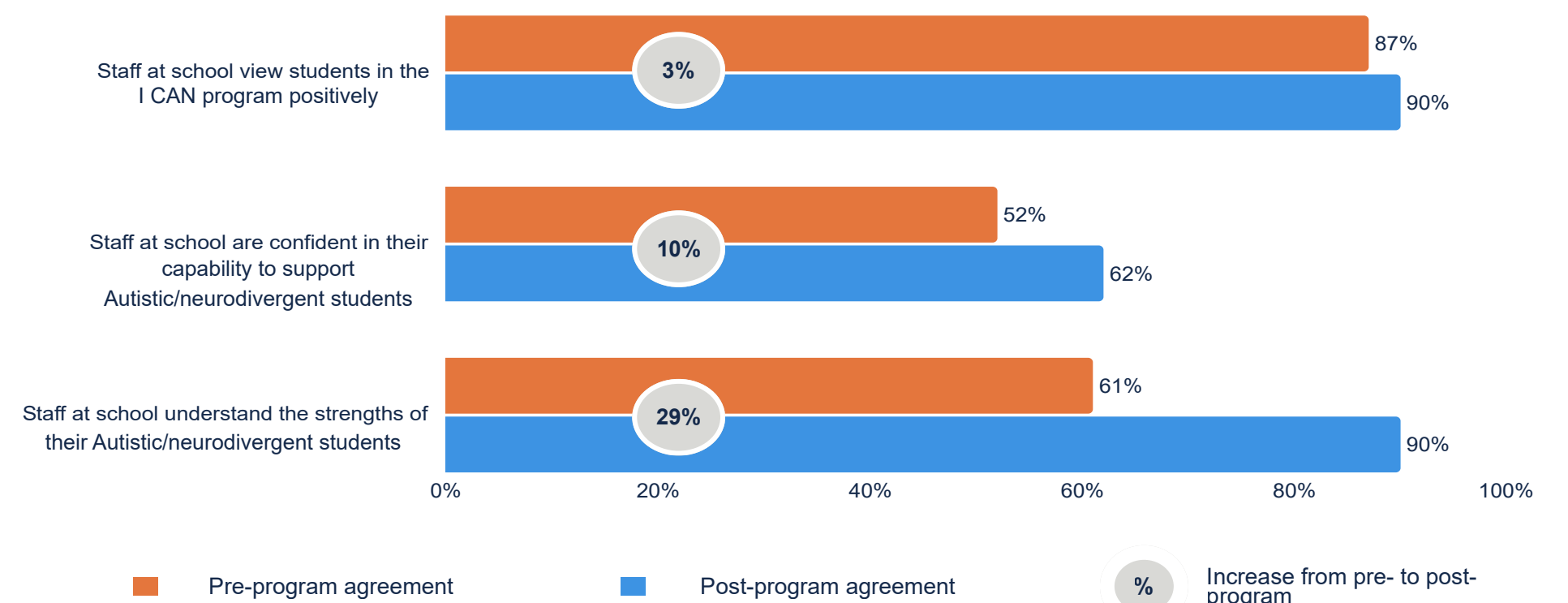
Note: only post-program survey data was collected from teachers.

Figure 3: Levels of agreement on participants' self-acceptance



Likewise, the I CAN School® program is having a positive impact on teachers who supervise I CAN sessions as well as on the broader school staff. In post-program surveys, most supervising teachers (79%) indicated that they could apply what they learnt from observing I CAN mentoring sessions to their classroom teaching. They also noted an overall increase in the broader school staff's understanding of how to support Autistic/neurodivergent students, as well as a recognition of the strengths these students possess.

Figure 4: Supervising teacher change in agreement on capability to support Autistic students



ENABLING PROGRAMS

As part of our distinctive 'whole of school' approach, we also provide enabling programs for school staff and support for parent/carers, including professional development, the Disability Inclusion Ambassador program and supporting resources.

In the first two years of the expansion, we've far exceeded the target of 30 professional development events per year, holding **133 events** that reached **3,937 attendees**. This includes delivering 81 PD events to government school staff in FY2025. Evaluation results show solid performance across the board, with the strongest survey responses regarding the PD program's impact on staff understanding of neurodiversity and strategies to support neurodivergent students. Many respondents made specific comments about the immense value of having Autistic/neurodivergent presenters share their lived experience insights.

Building on this momentum, in the first 18 months of their role, our inaugural Disability Inclusion Ambassadors – **Rachael Hamilton** (I CAN Program Facilitator and Bendigo Senior Secondary College Alumnus) and **Cylan Waldhart** (I CAN Mentor and Geelong High School Alumnus) – shared their personal stories and insights at 58 events, surpassing the expansion plan target of 50. These Autistic/multiply neurodivergent young adults, with very recent experience of secondary school, bring an important perspective to school presentations and policy discussions.

Further supporting our expansion, the launch of the I CAN Education microsite in FY2025 created a space to share practical tools and resources for neurodivergent students, teachers, support staff and parents/carers. In FY2025, we released nine resources, including a graphic novel to support the transition to Year 7, five digital stories, and three tip sheets for school leaders, teachers and support staff. Survey results indicate that 93% of respondents who accessed resources found them to be valuable.

I CAN ONLINE (VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT SCHOOL STUDENTS)

I CAN Online is our national mentoring program for young people aged 7-22, discussed in detail in the next section. Our expansion plan in Victoria is designed to increase participation by Autistic students from Victorian government schools in our I CAN Online groups (weekly or one-off) to experience positive peer support. The delivery method allows us to reach students who might not have access to an I CAN School® program, as well as current participants who could benefit from additional support outside of school.

As of May 2025, I CAN offered 1,584 places in the I CAN Online Mentoring Program to Victorian government school students. A total of 501 unique mentees from 310 Victorian government schools participated, with 196 students joining more than one 6-week cycle.

High rates of participant satisfaction (85% or higher) were observed across programs, with progress toward short-term outcomes, particularly in participants' connections with their peer group and enhanced feelings of social connection.



A CLOSER LOOK: I CAN ONLINE'S NATIONAL REACH

I CAN Online, our national, Autistic-led group mentoring program for 7–22-year-olds, continues to play a powerful role in facilitating social connection for Australia's Autistic young people, many of whom are vulnerable to mental ill-health and isolation. For this reason, our nationwide service delivery vision is: ***All Autistic young people have I CAN® available to them, for their connection and confidence.*** With support from **The Myer Foundation** and **Social Ventures Australia**, we developed a business case in 2025 to bring this vision to fruition.

OUR REACH

I CAN Online consists of:

- 6-week program cycle: 6 x 1-hour sessions held weekly
- 6-week Social Server Program (Minecraft or Dungeons and Dragons): 6 x 2-hour sessions held weekly
- Minecraft Social Server Sessions: 2-hour sessions on Saturdays

In FY24-FY25, more than 1,600 Autistic young people nationwide participated in I CAN Online, with 42% of our participants taking part in multiple cycles.

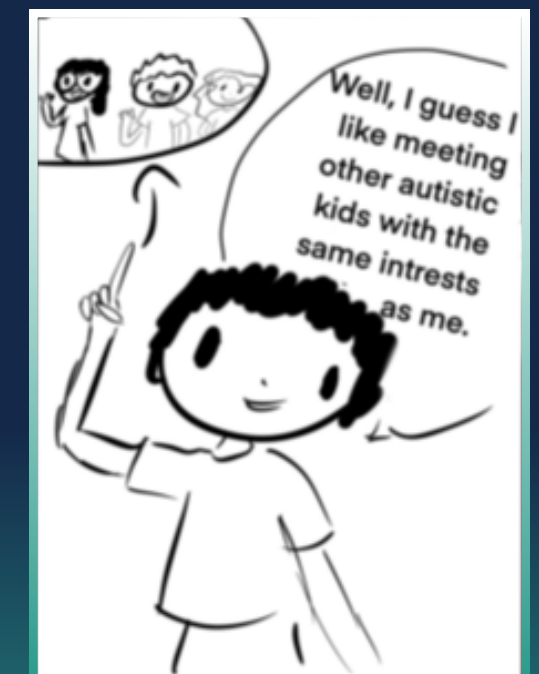
In total:

- 332 groups (6 or 8-week cycles) were delivered to 1,248 unique participants.
- 94 groups (1-week programs) were delivered to 598 unique participants.



CONNECTING THROUGH SHARED INTERESTS & EXPERIENCES

Our online mentoring groups are different from most others available in Australia. We don't teach neurotypical social skills. Instead, we offer a safe, inclusive space that fosters greater confidence, communication and social connection. Led by Autistic mentors, participants can engage at a level that feels right for them each day. They can be unapologetically themselves among peers and mentors who truly relate to them through shared special interests and life experiences.



A CLOSER LOOK: I CAN ONLINE'S NATIONAL REACH

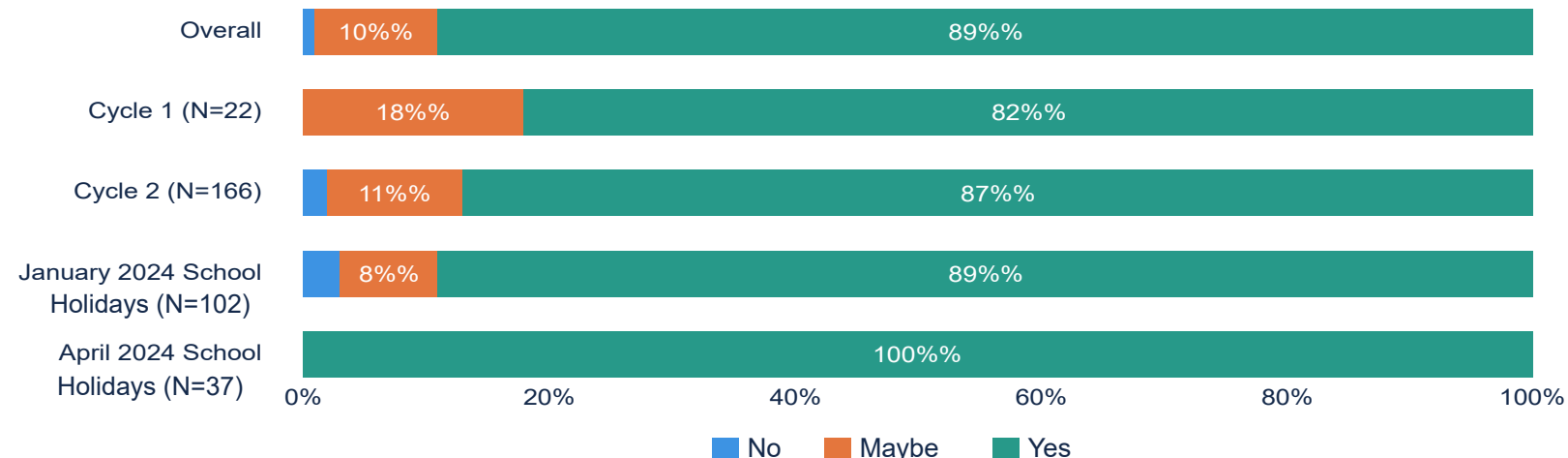


In addition to longstanding popular themes such as Pokémon, Art, Dinosaurs, Transition to Year 7 and Autistic LGBTQIA+ teens and young adults, we respond to our community's interests by regularly adding exciting new groups to our standard 6-week program and 1-week program. In 2024-2025, we added new groups for participants to explore K-pop, Heartbreaker, Cosplay, Cats & Dogs, Executive Functioning, and more. The success of our supervised, secure Minecraft server in 2024 has led to an ongoing Saturday program and extended 2-hour weekly sessions for Dungeons & Dragons and Minecraft play.

PROGRAM SATISFACTION

I CAN Online consistently achieves high levels of satisfaction across programs.

Figure 1



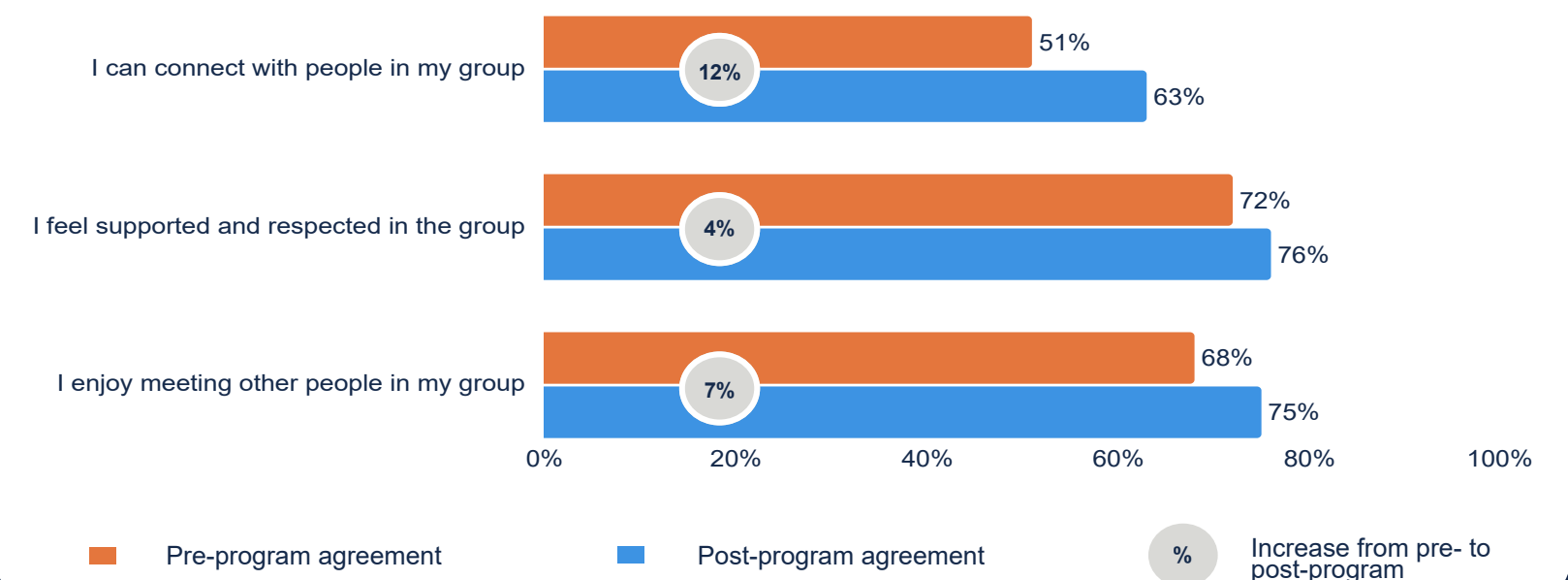
IMPACT

Our inclusive evaluation approach combines quantitative and qualitative methods. Pre- and post-program Zoom surveys for participants measure changes in outlook over the course of the group. Creative reflections (drawings, videos, stories) and verbal feedback ensure all communication styles are supported.

I CAN collects evaluation data from mentees via Zoom polls at the program's first and final sessions. Over FY25, we saw positive changes among participants across various outcomes (the Cube Group's Final Interim Report #2):

- 12% increase in feeling able to connect with peers in their group
- 7% increase in meeting new people in their group
- 4% increase in feeling supported and respected in the group

Figure 2: Participant agreement on connecting with people in their group



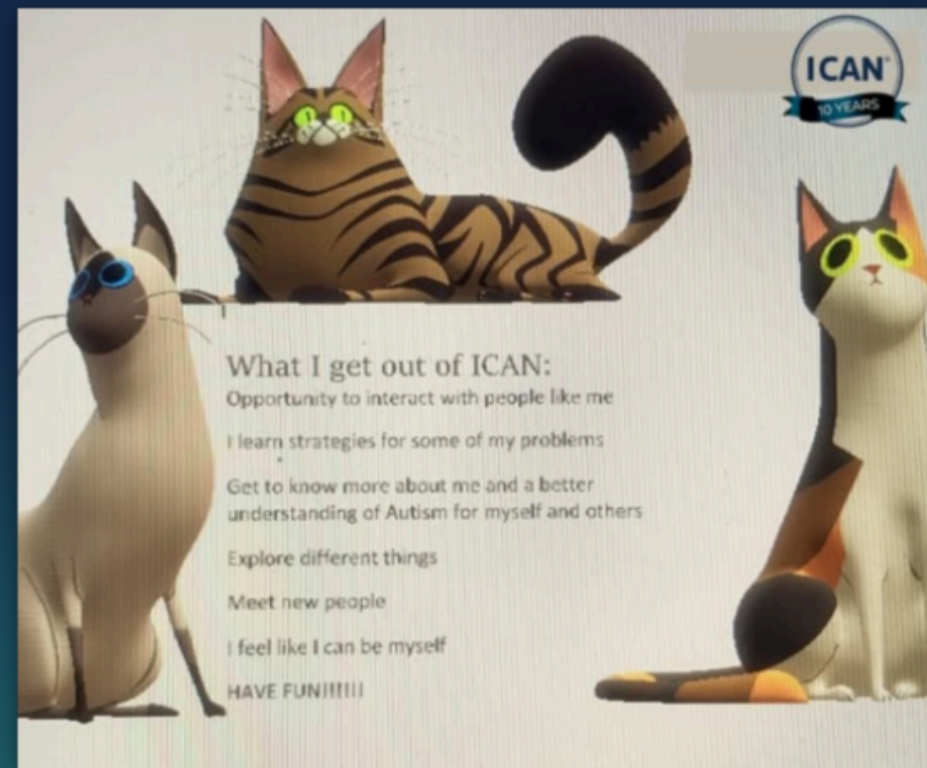
A CLOSER LOOK: I CAN ONLINE'S NATIONAL REACH

IN THEIR OWN VOICES



I have found the I CAN mentoring helpful because it has been good to be with my neurokin which is something I have not had much of before in my life. It has also been so interesting to discuss topics that neurodivergent people understand and finding my place in this difficult world to live in. I have realised there are comforts that I need that allow me to be happy and that it is ok to be neurodivergent.

- Participant



INDEPENDENT EVALUATIONS

At I CAN, we value performance evaluations to assess the impact of our programs, identify opportunities for growth and improvement, and ensure we achieve our intended outcomes. In addition to our robust internal performance reviews, we welcome independent evaluations as part of our commitment to excellence.

I CAN SCHOOLS

Sandra Thom-Jones, The Evolution of the I CAN Schools Program: An Evidence-Based Intervention to Support Autistic Students in Australian Schools (2024).

In a 2024 independent report to the Victorian Department of Education, Professor Sandra Thom-Jones, an Autistic autism researcher, conducted a detailed evaluation tracing the development and outcomes of the I CAN School® mentoring programs over time, including insights into program design and impact.

Professor Thom-Jones found that the I CAN Schools Program stands out for Autistic students by directly addressing their challenges in Australian schools and empowering them through a unique approach that:

- Is designed and delivered by Autistic people, in contrast to other established programs
- Employs a strengths-based philosophy
- Cultivates a safe and inclusive environment for participants

These elements improve students' well-being, sense of belonging, and school experience, as confirmed by strong feedback from students, parents and teachers. Professor Thom-Jones also identified I CAN's commitment to continuous program improvement as a key factor in our positive impact.

OUR BEDROCK

In 2022, the Australian Catholic University (ACU) conducted a comprehensive, independent evaluation of our school and online mentoring programs, funded by the Victorian Department of Education. The evaluation found positive outcomes, including increased belonging, social connectedness, a stronger Autistic identity, and improved self-esteem and optimism among participants. ACU concluded that the strong evidence behind our programs warranted a 'tangible and time-sensitive expansion..to allow all neurodiverse students the opportunity to access whichever version of the program is most suited to their needs'.* This evaluation helped inform our expansion across Victorian government schools. Since publication, the report has become the bedrock to the development of the different logic maps guiding I CAN program design and delivery.

(Jones, S., Lowe, J., Mizzi, S. (2022). Independent Evaluation: I CAN Network Mentoring Programs Final Report 15 December 2022, Australian Catholic University Research Impact Unit.)

VICTORIAN EXPANSION

Cube Group, Independent Evaluation of the I CAN Network Expansion (2025).

Cube Group was engaged by the Victorian Department of Education to independently evaluate the I CAN Network expansion from May 2024 to May 2027. The first phase, conducted in 2024-2025, focused on implementation. Cube Group consulted 35 stakeholders from our organisation, partner schools, and the Department, and analysed 2,785 pre- and post-program surveys from student participants, teachers and staff, and parents/carers.

Among the key findings:

- There is a continued and demonstrable need for I CAN mentoring programs, particularly the I CAN School® program, which is unique because it is designed, led, and delivered by Autistic individuals, providing school-based and online support tailored for neurodivergent students.
- I CAN's expansion of enabling programs promotes a whole-school approach to supporting neurodivergent students' mental health and wellbeing.
- The I CAN Network expansion has progressed towards intended short-term outcomes in I CAN School®, I CAN Imagination Club®, I CAN Online and the professional development program.
- I CAN has continued to meet deliverables on time.

KEY PARTNERSHIPS

The past two years brought significant growth and impact for I CAN. In addition to the regular donations we receive from individuals and family trusts, we are grateful to partner with public, private and non-profit organisations that value investing in programs that empower and are shaped by Autistic people.

ENHANCING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The **Victorian Department of Education** has been a critical partner in I CAN's growth and development since 2014. From our close working relationships with teachers and school leaders in our partner schools to active collaboration and co-design of resources with the Department's Inclusive Education Division, together we are transforming how Autistic and other neurodivergent students are supported. Our partnership reached new heights with a \$5.7 million investment over four financial years (FY 24-27) in I CAN programs to support the Department's Disability Inclusion reforms and Autism Education Strategy. I CAN's expansion plan in Victoria will see us grow our school mentoring program to 254 Victorian government schools by 2027. At the close of FY2025, we had already signed 201 schools. We are well on track to our goal of offering 11,500 collective program spaces via our I CAN School® and I CAN Online programs to Victorian Government school students by 2027.



ENABLING OUR EXPANSION

We are very grateful to be one of the Social Impact Partners of **Future Generation Global**, which invests in not-for-profits that are working to promote wellbeing and prevent mental ill-health. This partnership has enabled us to build the critical staffing, digital marketing and IT systems needed to surpass our FY2025 expansion goals in Victorian government schools and lay the foundation for the future growth of I CAN Online nationally. The enhancement of our customer relationship management system through Salesforce is a pivotal development that allows us to track each customer's experience more accurately across our school-based and online programs and provide a powerful measure of our longitudinal impact. During FY2025, we tested many digital marketing tactics largely focused on I CAN Online. Several were highly successful. This positions us to develop a more focused plan to deepen I CAN Online's reach beyond Australia's eastern states.

EMPOWERING AUTISTIC YOUNG PEOPLE

We are deeply appreciative of the **Federal Department of Health, Disability and Ageing** and **Newsboys Foundation** for serving as primary co-supporters of the I CAN Expo by I CAN Network, an annual event in which Autistic students share their passions and insights. The day, which is Australia's largest event for Autistic youth, follows I CAN's 8-session school programs and 6-week online group mentoring programs. The Expo has a deliberate bent on exposing Autistic and other neurodivergent young people to senior secondary and post-school pathways, as well as connecting the parents/carers of I CAN participants with peer support programs. In FY25, we prepared a professional development track for I CAN Expo 2025 for teachers and support staff which will be reported on in our FY26 Annual Report.

We also thank the Expo sponsors/exhibitors who signed on for Expo 2025 in FY25: Victorian Department of Education, Amaze, ANZ, La Trobe University, Positive Partnerships, 4GR, ACD, MyCareSpace, AbilityWorks, Kaboose, Aspergers Victoria, Autism Spectrum Australia, Light Occupational Therapy, WhereTo, the Victorian Student Representative Council, Youth Disability Advocacy Service and Focus Bear.



EXTENDING DELIVERY OF I CAN ONLINE

I CAN Online, our national and independently-evaluated online group mentoring program for Autistic young people aged 7-22, provides participants with the peer support and social connection that can protect against isolation and mental ill health. Our service delivery aspiration is to provide this support to every Autistic young person in Australia who could benefit. A grant from **The Myer Foundation** in FY2024 enabled us to develop the business case to expand I CAN Online. The business case, developed in collaboration with **Social Ventures Australia**, has been condensed into a [pitch document](#) for philanthropic funders.

INCREASING AUTISTIC EMPLOYMENT

Across Australia, we have an 18.2% unemployment rate among Autistic people aged 15 years and over. This is more than double the rate for all people with disability (7.5%) and early six times higher than the general population. A grant from **The Ian Potter Foundation** allowed us to undertake two programs in 2024-2025 to help address the issue and provide a model for other organisations to follow. We launched a Mentor Traineeship Program for Autistic recent school leavers with greater support requirements (e.g., co-occurring intellectual disability, processing delays, non-speaking) to develop workplace skills through the I CAN Online group mentoring teams. Concurrently, we increased the job security and financial capacity of our Autistic I CAN Program Facilitators Level 2 by converting several positions from casual to part-time/full-time staff and setting weekly hours to develop their skills. These internships provide an excellent gateway for Autistic staff seeking to build careers in disability, allied care and education.

FY2025 FINANCIALS

In FY2025, I CAN continued its implementation of the I CAN expansion funded by the Victorian Department of Education. The expansion has involved a \$5.7 million investment by the Department over FY24 - FY27. It has offered an unprecedented opportunity to bring our evidence-based, neuro-affirming programs to Autistic/neurodivergent students in government schools across Victoria and, in the process, create more inclusive, empowered school communities. Independent evaluations indicate our progress in meeting or surpassing the immediate-term goals of the expansion while laying a strong foundation for deeper, longer-term impact.

I CAN has made a significant upfront investment in its achievement of its targets with the Department. Investments have been made into our customer relationship management system, integrated scheduling system and a staffing restructure. Since the phasing of the Department's funding is more heavily weighted towards the end of the contract (FY26-FY27), I CAN planned for a deficit in FY25, however the deficit (-\$396,689) was 13.5% less than budgeted which was pleasing. The Department's funding, over FY24-FY27, does cover I CAN's costs for the expansion over the four-year period.



INCOME	AMOUNT
Government (including grants)	\$1,056,316.00
Donation and Requests	\$321,346.00
Goods and services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I CAN School® Program • I CAN Imagination Club® • I CAN Online • I CAN Expo • Talks - Schools • Talks - Other Organisations 	\$1,352,119.00
Interest from Investments	\$7,817.00
Sub-total	\$2,737,598.00

FINANCIALS



EXPENSES	AMOUNT
Employee expenses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wages • Superannuation • Annual Leave • Long Service Leave 	\$2,565,021
Other expenses, including insurance	\$569,266
Sub-total	\$3,134,287
Total profit/loss	-\$396,689

BALANCE SHEET SUMMARY	AMOUNT
Total Current Assets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash in bank accounts • Prepayments • Trade debtors 	\$935,741
Total Non-Current Assets	\$20,888
Total Assets	\$956,630
Total Current Liabilities	\$396,843
Total Non-Current Liabilities	\$0
Total Liabilities	\$396,843
Total Net Assets/Liabilities	\$559,787

CHAOS SMP



Attribution: Artwork by a mentee from an 2022 CAN program in a government school in Western Victoria. The mentees named this specific I CAN group 'Chaos Server Multiplayer'.



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