



DECEMBER 2022 SUMMARY REPORT

VICTORIAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING &
I CAN NETWORK LTD 2020 - 2023 SERVICE AGREEMENT
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Terminology

School mentoring programs refer to I CAN Network Ltd's group mentoring program in both primary and secondary schools.

I CAN School[®] program refers to the secondary school version of I CAN Network Ltd's school mentoring programs which focus on building Autistic identity and social connections.

I CAN Imagination Club[®] refers to the primary school version of I CAN Network Ltd's school mentoring programs which, to date, has been non-Autism specific. At times in this document, I CAN Imagination Club can be referred to under the umbrella of 'I CAN Schools' or 'I CAN School programs'.

Preface

The following document is the Executive Summary of the I CAN Network Ltd Common Funding Agreement (CFA) December 2022 Summary Report for the Victorian Department of Education.

The full report can be made available to Victorian Department of Education (School Education Programs & Support Division) staff upon written request (from a VDET email) to Dr James Ong Evaluation and Policy Manager at james@icannetwork.com.au.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – *STORIES OF BELONGING*

This report provides an overview of the outputs and outcomes of I CAN Ltd's online and school mentoring programs for Victorian government students. The following report brings to life the following numbers in 2022 (Table 1).

Table 1: Numbers achieved in 2022

Output	Actual number in 2022 alone
Number of online mentees engaged who attend a Victorian government school	245 government students
Number of online programs run	180 online programs
Number of school programs run in Victorian government schools	60 school programs
Number of school mentoring sessions run in Victorian government schools	561 school mentoring sessions

Please refer to the Full Report's Appendix 2 Tables 18 and 19 for a full account of I CAN Ltd's progress against the 2020 - 2023 targets under its Common Funding Agreement with the Victorian Department of Education (VDET). Appendix 3 contains the criteria through which government schools are counted by I CAN. The results from Appendix 2 Tables 18 and 19 are summarised below.

Table 2: Performance against 2020 - 2023 targets

Target 2020 - 2023	Actual number over 2020 - 2022
Expand the I CAN Schools program to involve a total of at least 100 schools (approx. 1,000 students) by 2022-23	81 school campuses across 75 government schools
	906 government students
Develop, trial and implement an online group mentoring program for 500 school-aged students with Autism facilitated by people with Autism by 2022-23	711 government students

ENGAGING VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT STUDENTS THROUGH I CAN NETWORK'S NATIONAL ONLINE MENTORING PROGRAM

During the second half of 2022, we ran a total of 104 online programs nationwide over three six-week cycles and the Term 3 school holidays. Within these cycles, we attracted 154 new Victorian government students to our I CAN Online Mentoring Programs, bringing the total to 245 new Victorian government students in 2022. As a result, we have engaged a total of 711 Victorian government students in our I CAN Online Mentoring Programs from 2020 to 2022, exceeding the target of 500 Autistic students from Victorian government schools by 42% 18 months ahead of schedule.

Across the four six-week cycles in 2022, mentee satisfaction towards the online mentoring programs has remained high, exceeding 80% in each cycle. From our quantitative data, we have seen significant increases in mentees' confidence to meet and communicate with other Autistic young people in their I CAN Online group and to be themselves in the program. These quantitative results are mirrored when data is restricted to those living in Victoria. Analysis of mentee creations and parent comments further strengthen the evaluation findings, with mentees improving their social and communication skills, establishing social connections and experiencing positive changes in themselves.

Overall, these results highlight the strong interest in our I CAN Online Mentoring Programs among Autistic young people across Australia, including those who attend Victorian government schools. By attending these programs, Autistic young people build social connections by meeting other peers like them and improve their self-esteem by being allowed to be themselves in the program.

ENGAGING VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS THROUGH THE I CAN NETWORK'S SCHOOL MENTORING PROGRAMS

In 2022, we ran 561 mentoring sessions across 60 school mentoring programs in Victorian government primary and secondary schools. Coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, I CAN Network has seen massive growth in its school mentoring programs across Victoria in 2022, and it is anticipated that this will continue in 2023.

Satisfaction rates towards the mentoring programs have been high, with 92% and 91% mentees being satisfied with the I CAN School® and Imagination Club® mentoring programs respectively. I CAN School® Programs have seen statistically significant increases in outcomes among Autistic students in government secondary schools. These include a 19% increase in social connection with other Autistic students and a 17% increase in self-confidence. These results are backed up by positive comments from mentees, saying that they not only found the programs fun and enjoyable, but also improved their social and communication skills by meeting like-minded peers and became more confident and accepting of themselves.

For I CAN Imagination Club®, mentees achieved an increase in self-confidence and felt more confident and accepting of themselves after the program. Furthermore, by meeting like-minded peers, they built their social connections, making friends in the process, and improved their teamwork and communication skills.

Collectively, these results suggest that the school mentoring programs are continuing to have a positive impact on Autistic young people in Victoria, not only in terms of building social connections but also in improving mentees' sense of self.

SUMMARIES OF OTHER SECTIONS OF THE FULL REPORT

- Greater Melbourne: The team has run many school mentoring programs in the region over the second half of 2022. The COVID-19 pandemic had minimal disruption to programs in the region due to the resilience shown by mentoring staff. Case studies of Hoppers Crossing SC, Parkdale SC, Western Autistic School/Seaholme Primary School and Macleod College describe the experiences of running mentoring programs in these schools.
- Northern Victoria: Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and the Victorian floods disrupting school mentoring programs in the region, the team has been working hard to run them in both new and existing schools. In particular, this year has seen the team run mentoring programs in the Greater Bendigo region, starting with three schools. The case study in Crusoe College describes the experiences of running mentoring programs in Bendigo.
- South West: Having run most of its school mentoring programs in the first half of 2022, the South West team has run a small number of programs in the second half of 2022. Despite this, the team has re-engaged schools in Hamilton and Warrnambool who have run school mentoring programs in the past, with the possibility of running new mentoring programs in 2023. The case study in Baimbridge College describes the experiences of running both student talks and peer mentoring programs in the school.
- Barwon and Central Highlands: Thanks to positive word of mouth and excellent evaluation results, the team has seen strong interest towards the school mentoring programs from schools in the Barwon and Central Highlands regions. The case studies in Surf Coast Secondary College and Rollins Primary School discuss the positive impacts of the programs on mentees in these schools.

In addition to the regional reports for school mentoring programs, the Full Report also reports on evaluation data for the AWETISM Expo and engagement data for VDET's online booth.