



STATEMENT FROM THE I CAN NETWORK ON THE INTRODUCTION OF JULIA, MUPPET WITH AUTISM, TO SESAME STREET

APRIL 14, 2017-

The I CAN Network is pleased to see the recent introduction of Julia, a Muppet with Autism, to the Sesame Street family.

Sesame Street has been a cherished childhood programme for over 40 years and has a solid place in the hearts of millions of children and adults.

That's why it is so important for the show to have an inclusive, diverse cast that is reflective of its audience.

The introduction of Julia allows for an explanation of Autism in an unbiased, trusted environment, to an understanding audience and at an age when many children will be starting kinder or school and coming across peers on the Autism Spectrum.

Julia possesses traits that are common to people on the Autism Spectrum, from flapping to selective hearing. These are explained in easy-to-understand terms that present Julia as another side of normal to kids.

It encourages children to see Autism as simply a different kind of friend in their journey through life, and presents Autism not in a negative or scary light, but in a non-judgmental frame, potentially changing the discourse on Autism for thousands of young viewers. This is in line with the I CAN Network's broader aims: to break down negative stereotypes about Autism and create a world that benefits from embracing people on the Autism Spectrum.

We are pleased to see Sesame Street take this leap forward and hope that it leads to more diverse characters on other television shows – and not just in the realm of children's programming. We encourage Sesame Street to co-design Julia's scripts with a diverse range of Autistic voices.

ENDS

The I CAN Network is driving a rethink of Autism, from 'I Can't' to 'I CAN'. We mentor young people on the Autism Spectrum to live life with an 'I CAN' attitude. We bring out the 'awe' in AWETism through education, advocacy and providing opportunities. We build networks across schools, universities, TAFEs, communities, businesses and governments. Together, we are Australia's first social enterprise founded by people with Autism. You can read more us in our [Annual Report](#).