URBIS

REVIEW OF THE SECOND STEP PROGRAM PILOT
GOT IT! UNIVERSAL COMPONENT
FINAL REPORT

Prepared for
Mental Health: Children and Young Persons Team
Mental Health Branch, NSW Ministry of Health
AUGUST 2019

This report is dated **22 August 2019** and incorporates information and events up to that date only and excludes any information arising, or event occurring, after that date which may affect the validity of Urbis Pty Ltd's (Urbis) opinion in this report. Urbis prepared this report on the instructions, and for the benefit only, of NSW Ministry of Health (Instructing Party) for the purpose of a Second Step Review Report (Purpose) and not for any other purpose or use. Urbis expressly disclaims any liability to the Instructing Party who relies or purports to rely on this report for any purpose other than the Purpose and to any party other than the Instructing Party who relies or purports to rely on this report for any purpose whatsoever (including the Purpose).

In preparing this report, Urbis was required to make judgements which may be affected by unforeseen future events including wars, civil unrest, economic disruption, financial market disruption, business cycles, industrial disputes, labour difficulties, political action and changes of government or law, the likelihood and effects of which are not capable of precise assessment.

All surveys, forecasts, projections and recommendations contained in or made in relation to or associated with this report are made in good faith and on the basis of information supplied to Urbis at the date of this report. Achievement of the projections and budgets set out in this report will depend, among other things, on the actions of others over which Urbis has no control.

Urbis has made all reasonable inquiries that it believes is necessary in preparing this report but it cannot be certain that all information material to the preparation of this report has been provided to it as there may be information that is not publicly available at the time of its inquiry.

In preparing this report, Urbis may rely on or refer to documents in a language other than English which Urbis will procure the translation of into English. Urbis is not responsible for the accuracy or completeness of such translations and to the extent that the inaccurate or incomplete translation of any document results in any statement or opinion made in this report being inaccurate or incomplete, Urbis expressly disclaims any liability for that inaccuracy or incompleteness.

This report has been prepared with due care and diligence by Urbis and the statements and opinions given by Urbis in this report are given in good faith and in the belief on reasonable grounds that such statements and opinions are correct and not misleading bearing in mind the necessary limitations noted in the previous paragraphs. Further, no responsibility is accepted by Urbis or any of its officers or employees for any errors, including errors in data which is either supplied by the Instructing Party, supplied by a third party to Urbis, or which Urbis is required to estimate, or omissions howsoever arising in the preparation of this report, provided that this will not absolve Urbis from liability arising from an opinion expressed recklessly or in bad faith.

Urbis staff responsible for this report were:

Director	Poppy Wise
Consultant	Jake Formosa
Consultant	Tom Hayes
Research Analyst	Abigail Chan
Administrative Assistant	Brenda Fong

Project code	P0008141
Report number	Final Report

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

URBIS WAS COMMISSIONED TO REVIEW THE SUITABILITY OF 'SECOND STEP' FOR THE UNIVERSAL COMPONENT OF THE *GOT IT!* PROGRAM IN NSW SCHOOLS

GETTING ON TRACK IN TIME

Getting on Track in Time (*Got It!*) is a specialised early intervention mental health program for children in Kindergarten to Year 2 (K-2) who display behavioural concerns or emerging conduct problems. *Got It!* is delivered in schools by the NSW Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in partnership with the NSW Department of Education (DoE) and aims to:

- Reduce the frequency and severity of conduct problems in young children
- strengthen the parenting abilities of parents and carers
- build capabilities of school staff and the capacity of the school system to respond to children with conduct problems and their families.

Got It! has two components. The universal program involves teacher training and delivery of a social-emotional learning program by teachers, and includes screening and assessment of children aged 5-8 years. The second component involves a small group, targeted therapeutic program for a select number of children and parents.

SECOND STEP

Second Step was selected as the preferred program to pilot as the universal component of *Got It!* after analysis of 35 international social-emotional learning programs. Existing evidence[1] from the United States demonstrates the program supports positive social-emotional outcomes for students.

Second Step is a classroom-based program designed to increase students' school success and decrease problem behaviours by promoting social-emotional competence and strategies for emotion regulation.

The program consists of 22-25 short weekly lessons which cover a range of concepts including skills for learning, empathy, emotion management and problem solving. A resource kit, tailored for each year level, includes scripted lesson plans, engaging songs and games, daily activities, and take-home materials to reinforce learning beyond the classroom. It is designed to be easy for teachers to integrate social-emotional learning into their classroom.

Second Step fulfils the universal component of *Got It!* to provide a social-emotional learning program for the classroom setting.

ABOUT THE REVIEW

The Second Step program was piloted from January to June 2019 in nine schools located in Sydney, North Sydney, Central Coast, Newcastle, Orange and the Blue Mountains. Urbis was commissioned by the Ministry of Health to review the suitability of the Second Step program as an additional social-emotional program for use in the universal component of *Got It!*.

Specifically, the Review aimed to:
- capture the implementation and early delivery experience of teachers, parents, and *Got It!* clinicians
- identify any emerging themes related to the implementation and delivery of the Second Step program
- determine if Second Step is suitable for implementation as part of the *Got It!* program
- document any key learnings that can be used to strengthen the delivery and implementation of Second Step within the *Got It!* program.

The review was based on the *Evaluation Plan Report: Stage 2A Got It! Second Step Pilot*, prepared by Associate Professor David Hawes at the University of Sydney. This evaluation plan informed the objectives and methodology of this Review.

[1] Low, S., Cook, C. R., Smolkowski, K., & Buntain-Ricklefs, J. (2015). Promoting social–emotional competence: An evaluation of the elementary version of Second Step. Journal of School Psychology, 53, 463–477.

URBIS EXAMINED A COMBINATION OF QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE DATA TO REVIEW THE SECOND STEP PROGRAM AND DISTIL KEY FINDINGS

METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

The review was conducted over three stages from March to June 2019. The process included consultation with key stakeholders involved in the Second Step program at nine pilot schools in NSW, including *Got It!* clinicians, teachers and parents. The review also included an analysis of checklist surveys completed by teachers following each Second Step lesson they completed.
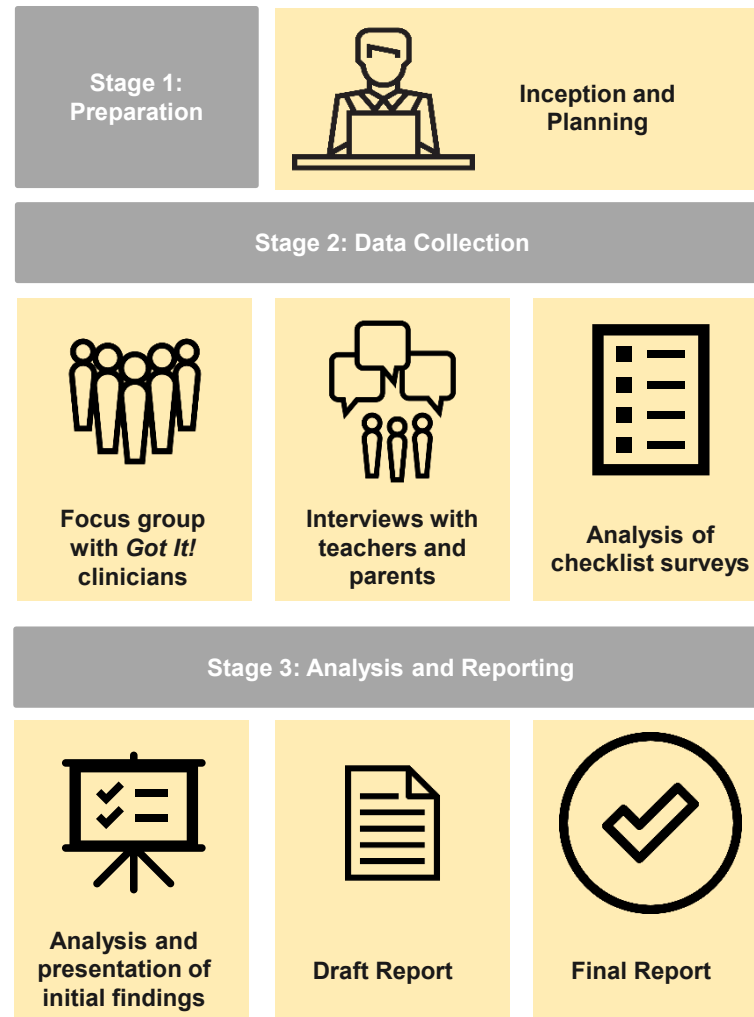
In total, Urbis held one focus group with *Got It!* clinicians (n=15 participants), conducted eight group interviews with teachers (n=24 participants), five group interviews with parents (n=10 participants), analysed written feedback from teachers and parents from one school (n=4 participants), and analysed checklist surveys from nine schools (n=197).

The scope of questions in the qualitative and quantitative instruments varied.

LIMITATIONS

The following research limitations should be considered when reviewing this report:

- Clinicians were able to comment on the suitability of Second Step as the universal component of *Got It!* Teachers and parents were not familiar with the *Got It!* implementation guidelines. As such, their comments reflect their opinion of the role and suitability of the Second Step program more broadly, rather than in relation to *Got It!* specifically.

- Consultation with parents was not able to be undertaken in all schools, so the views of participants may not represent those held by all parents.

- Implementation dates varied between schools. As such, the views of parents and teachers from different schools may differ based on stage of implementation.

- At the time of the Review, no more than half of Second Step lessons had been delivered. As such, teachers and parents had not experienced full program implementation when sharing their perspectives.

- Schools only had three teachers complete the checklist surveys each week. Therefore, results may not be representative of all teachers participating in the program. In addition, Urbis has no oversight on how consistently these were completed.

Stage 1: Preparation | **Inception and Planning**

Stage 2: Data Collection

Focus group with *Got It!* clinicians | **Interviews with teachers and parents** | **Analysis of checklist surveys**

Stage 3: Analysis and Reporting

Analysis and presentation of initial findings | **Draft Report** | **Final Report**

KEY FINDINGS

SECOND STEP CONTENT AND DELIVERY IS SUITABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION BY *GOT IT!* IN NSW SCHOOLS, AND POSITIVE IMPACTS RELATED TO THE PROGRAM ARE EMERGING

The adoption of Second Step as a guiding social-emotional learning program within the universal program of *Got It!* displayed signs of positive program implementation, delivery and impact. Findings from the review indicated that the aims of the program were well understood, with both teachers and parents viewing social-emotional learning as critical for students' development. Teachers were successfully trained to deliver the program, leading to classroom delivery largely being implemented as intended. Several improvements to the program's implementation and delivery were identified by teachers and parents. Overall, Second Step was perceived as a suitable social-emotional learning program for NSW schools. A summary of findings related to the outcomes, implementation and suitability of the program are provided below.

SUITABILITY	IMPLEMENTATION	IMPACT
Second Step is a suitable program for implementation within the universal component of *Got It!,* as outlined in the *Got It!* Implementation Guidelines[2]. The content is highly relevant and fits with schools' needs. The interactive nature of the lessons caters to a range of student learning styles.	Teacher training by *Got It!* teams was highly successful, enabling relatively quick and easy implementation of Second Step lessons in classrooms.	In line with existing evidence[3], this review of Second Step showed that:
Increased integration with school systems, the curriculum, and improved program materials, will heighten the impacts of the program.	The program engaged students, supporting their understanding of key social-emotional concepts.	- children who experienced the program, as part of the *Got It!* universal component delivery, displayed emergent positive behaviours linked to the program - Second Step contributes to school's social-emotional educational curriculum - The stage of implementation influenced the outcomes observed by schools.
	The review identified a consistent approach to engaging parents and flexible lesson structures as areas to optimise to strengthen outcomes.	The review showed that Second Step has value as an education tool that facilitates and fosters social-emotional learning and compliments *Got It!* program delivery.

The review highlighted several areas where improvements could be made to support the program moving forward. These included:
- allowing Second Step to be more closely integrated with school initiatives, systems and processes and the NSW curriculum
- adopting flexible or outcomes-based lesson structures to empower teachers to customise lessons to suit their class context and teaching style
- adapting US content to suit Australian audiences to increase student understanding of, and engagement with, key concepts
- facilitating more consistent parent engagement processes early in implementation to strengthen links between the classroom and home
- implementing teacher champions to offer leadership, guidance and sharing of best practice implementation.

[2] NSW Health (2017). Getting On Track In Time – *Got It!* Program Delivery Implementation Guidelines. NSW Ministry of Health
[3] Low, S., Cook, C. R., Smolkowski, K., & Buntain-Ricklefs, J. (2015). Promoting social–emotional competence: An evaluation of the elementary version of Second Step. Journal of School Psychology, 53, 463–477.

IMPLEMENTATION OF SECOND STEP WAS SUCCESSFUL, ENABLING QUICK AND EASY UPTAKE OF PROGRAM MATERIALS

The Second Step review examined training and orientation, specifically focussing on the usefulness and effectiveness of training by *Got It!* teams, as well as the uptake, adoption and implementation of course materials by teachers and students.

The practical, face-to-face training by *Got It!* clinicians enabled teachers to easily translate Second Step into a classroom environment

The simple course materials provided a thorough overview of the theoretical and practical components. 'Classroom role-plays' facilitated by *Got It!* clinicians were a particularly effective training tool, enabling a quick uptake of the program. Online materials were useful as a supplementary resource to the face-to-face training, however teachers were eager to ensure face-to-face training was a key component moving forward.

> *They took us through what social-emotional learning was, and then we did some activities based on a classroom – it was really helpful – Teacher*

Second Step program materials enabled teachers to 'hit the ground running'

The lesson plans and activities were easily adopted, which was very appealing to time-poor teachers. Although there was a breadth of materials, some teachers didn't always draw on them all, or would concentrate on a particular "*favourite*" activity of the class, to ensure prolonged engagement. While the materials were easily implemented, some teachers noted they were prescriptive, which jarred with the teacher's classroom dynamic.

> *All the materials were straight-forward and meant that I could start teaching without having to worry too much about learning a whole new thing – Teacher*

Introducing Second Step worked best when it was woven into the school's systems and processes

Second Step training worked best when it was integrated into existing staff professional development. This allowed teachers time to understand the program, while also demonstrating the school's commitment to Second Step. 'Twilight learning' (after school hours training offered by *Got It!* teams), while efficient, made absorbing new content difficult after a day of teaching.

> *Professional learning was conducted as a whole school before commencing the program with easy to understand resources – Teacher*

Suggestions for improving program materials and integration with school systems are outlined in *Learnings to Consider* on page 14.

SECOND STEP HAD A HIGH LEVEL OF IMPACT IN THE CLASSROOM, WITH OPTIMISATIONS IDENTIFIED THAT COULD FURTHER STRENGTHEN OUTCOMES

The classroom delivery of Second Step as part of the universal component of *Got It!* was analysed to understand the program's impact and resonance. This included understanding the teacher's perspective of the program, as well as the perceived impact this had on their class.

Second Step was delivered with a high degree of program fidelity

For the most part, Second Step was delivered as intended, and taught at a regular time during the week.

79% of lessons included **all five** activities

97% of lessons included **the story and discussion**

76% of the time, lessons were **followed as intended**

The classroom activities were mostly fun and engaging, with this supporting understanding of the core concepts

The brain-builders, puppets, and use of pictures and posters were key highlights. However, some teachers felt that the lesson structures were repetitive, which made it difficult at times to maintain student engagement with the program.

> *Once I explained the concept, they [the kids] understood it, so there wasn't any reason to do the more advanced lessons as it was already covered* – Teacher

Schools had an inconsistent approach to parent engagement

While a variety of parent engagement channels (e.g. school newsletter, Facebook groups) were used, overall there was low parent engagement in the program. In some instances, schools did not communicate to parents that Second Step was occurring. This inconsistent approach, in part, was due to the fact that teachers and parents alike viewed Second Step as a normalised part of the curriculum.

30% of the time, teachers sent the **HomeLink exercises**

The impact of Second Step could be increased by helping teachers tailor the lessons to their students' needs

Training materials were most useful when adapted to different teaching styles and classroom dynamics. Furthermore, some teachers found the lesson structures prescriptive, with this inhibiting their teaching style. Moving forward, producing materials that enabled easier customisation has the potential to improve classroom delivery.

> *I read the first lesson word for word and the kids switched off. They know that's not how I teach. After that, I basically would do 10 minutes prep, and then do the lesson my own way* – Teacher

Suggestions for improving consistency of parent engagement are outlined in *Learnings to Consider* on page 14.

SECOND STEP IS A SUITABLE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM FOR NSW SCHOOLS, ALTHOUGH SOME ADJUSTMENTS WOULD ENHANCE ITS IMPACT

The Second Step program was examined for its suitability as a social-emotional learning program within a NSW school context. The analysis considered both the suitability of the content of the program, as well the format and method of presentation.

Second Step content was highly relevant and suited schools' social-emotional learning needs

Clinicians, teachers and parents felt that social-emotional learning was highly valuable and addressed a key educational need. Many teachers commented that Second Step provided a more thorough explanation of social-emotional concepts compared with similar programs they had used.

" *This feels totally relevant for the school. Already I feel like our teacher does this, but having a program dedicated to these skills is really important –* Parent

" *The schools immediately bought in and almost all expanded the program to the whole school -* Clinician

Second Step's interactive nature catered to a range of student learning styles

Lessons were interactive and fun, which helped students to understand key concepts. In turn, this provided students with the skills to recognise their own social-emotional needs, as well as the needs of their peers.

" *The kids were highly engaged. I would do playground duty and see them using the hand-actions [from Second Step] or practicing empathy –* Teacher

Increased integration with local school systems and the NSW curriculum would heighten suitability

Introducing the program to schools before they finalise their teaching plans for the year would allow the core concepts to be integrated with school-wide initiatives (i.e. school rules) and be reinforced through the delivery of other subjects. Earlier integration would also help reduce duplication with other social-emotional learning programs.

" *This lays the foundation for our school's learning culture. If we continued to do this inside and outside the classroom we will see a real shift –* Teacher

Improving Second Step materials would enhance student engagement

American language and imagery in the materials was jarring for NSW students and often detracted from the educational message. Examples of this language included:
- references to "Middle School"
- students not wearing school uniforms
- presence of yellow school buses

" *I spent the lesson explaining that middle school was high school – and it meant that the kids weren't thinking about what the lesson was actually about – Teacher*

Suggestions for improving program delivery, materials, and integration with school systems are outlined in *Learnings to Consider* on page14.

SECOND STEP CONTRIBUTES TO EMERGENT POSITIVE OUTCOMES AS ONE PART OF A SCHOOL'S SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL EDUCATION APPROACH

POSITIVE BEHAVIOURS LINKED TO THE PROGRAM ARE EMERGING

Teachers and parents reported that skills and concepts taught in Second Step lessons are beginning to be adopted by students. Teachers observed students using number of Second Step behaviours outside of lessons, including:

- use of words and actions (e.g. "*eyes-watching*", "*ears-listening*")
- self-talk to foster concentration
- use and recognition of 'trigger words'
- understanding of key concepts
- transferring core concepts into other areas of schooling such as the playground.

32% of the time, students 'often' or 'always' used the skills they learned from Second Step **on their own**

80% of the time, students 'often' or 'always' used the skills they learned from Second Step when **prompted**

SECOND STEP HAS VALUE AS A SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING TOOL

Teachers and parents recognise the importance of social-emotional learning for children. While multiple factors may contribute to student's behaviour change, Second Step was seen as a valuable social-emotional learning tool.

Some teachers felt that Second Step replicated skills which are taught elsewhere, with many schools reportedly running similar social-emotional learning programs, or teaching social-emotional learning concepts through implementing school rules or within the curriculum.

Second Step helps to embed and reinforce social-emotional learning skills and fosters positive behaviours that enable learning and are highly beneficial for school environments.

"Second Step isn't a catalyst for behaviour change, but it does deepen teaching and understanding of social-emotional concepts... Second Step is another layer or the icing on the cake for teaching these concepts - *Teacher*

OBSERVED OUTCOMES DEPEND ON A SCHOOL'S STAGE OF IMPLEMENTATION

Schools that were at a more advanced stage of implementation were better able to identify and comment on emerging positive behaviours linked to the Second Step program. This was particularly apparent with outcomes related to behaviour change. Unsurprisingly, schools at earlier stages of implementation had less evidence of Second Step contributing to positive outcomes.

"Early signs are quite positive, though we're only half way through so it's too early to tell – *Teacher*

"We're some way into it and we can see the kids starting to pick up behaviours and words used in the lesson - *Teacher*

"I've started to notice that the kids are responding to hand actions. Sometimes I'll even use some of the strategies to help calm them *– Parent*

LEARNINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

ADJUSTING HOW SECOND STEP IS INTRODUCED, IMPLEMENTED, AND MANAGED WITHIN NSW SCHOOLS COULD STRENGTHEN PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Greater integration will heighten the program's relevance and impact
Introducing Second Step and training teachers before schools finalise their teaching program enables Second Step to be integrated with other programs, school initiatives and the curriculum. This would enable core concepts to be more broadly embedded, increasing the potential to heighten the relevance and amplify the impact of the program.

Second Step can be optimised to better suit the Australian classroom
Updating the content and materials to be culturally relevant (e.g. referring to high school instead of middle school, and using Australian imagery) will enhance student engagement with the program. There are also opportunities to extend Second Step concepts into other lessons to achieve greater synergy with the curriculum and avoid duplication of content.

Greater flexibility within the lesson structure will be beneficial for teachers
Offering an outcomes-based lesson summary, in addition to the scripted option, would provide teachers the flexibility to customise the lessons by drawing on their own knowledge and expertise, while still allowing them to follow the scripted lessons if preferred.

Fostering teacher networks can strengthen teaching practices associated with Second Step
There was a desire to learn from more experienced teachers to understand different approaches to preparing and teaching Second Step concepts. This could be achieved by nominating school 'champions' or school cluster 'champions' to facilitate collaboration and share different implementation and delivery approaches.

Appropriate parent engagement has the potential to strengthen outcomes
Parents and teachers largely view Second Step's social-emotional content as a standard part of the curriculum. Providing a consistent approach to parent engagement has the potential to enable 'at home learning' that supports the core concepts taught in the classroom.

SECOND STEP IS A SUITABLE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM FOR NSW SCHOOLS TO IMPLEMENT WITHIN THE UNIVERSAL EDUCATION COMPONENT *GOT IT!*

Urbis was commissioned by the Ministry of Health to review the suitability of the Second Step program as a component of the *Got It!* model for NSW schools. The review consisted of analysis of checklist surveys, and interviews with *Got It!* clinicians, teachers, and parents in May 2019.

Overall, the Review found that:

- Second Step is a suitable social-emotional learning program for implementation within the universal component of *Got It!*

- program content is highly relevant and meets schools' social-emotional education needs

- the approach to training teachers was successful and allowed a relatively efficient implementation of Second Step lessons in classrooms

- the program engaged students, supporting their understanding of key social-emotional concepts

- in line with existing evidence, Second Step has value as a universal education tool for social-emotional learning.

Suggestions to optimise program materials, integration with existing school systems and processes, and engagement with parents have been identified. These will help strengthen program outcomes for NSW schools.

On balance, Second Step provides a suitable and valuable program to provide universal social-emotional classroom education as part of the *Got It!* model.

URBIS

URBIS.COM.AU