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NEW ONLINE TECHNOLOGY AIMS TO CHANGE BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

Around 463,000 young people are bullied online in Australia each year with victims being impacted by cyber-bullying to the point where some engage in self-harm and suicidal ideation.* The National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence, Australia's largest anti-bullying event in schools will be held on 18 March, and a new technology has been launched to help prevent online bullying.

~~reword~~ is the first technology of its kind in Australia. It works by identifying cruel or intimidating words in real time to prompt online users to reword their message or post.

Similar to spellcheck functionality, a red line appears through words to highlight bullying behaviour, encouraging online users to reconsider their choice of words.

Chris Tanti, CEO of headspace, Australia's National Youth Mental Health Foundation, said, "Sadly, online bullying is endemic. We're encouraged that this is a tangible online tool that will genuinely help change behaviour and reduce incidents of bullying."

Research through headspace has shown that 79 per cent of young people (12-25 years) are willing to reword when they see the red line.**

"The pressures on children in social media are intense. ~~reword~~ is one way we can help empower them in real time," he added.

The tool also encourages the online population to collaborate and become co-authors of new bullying terms, giving them ownership over ~~reword~~ while building the tool's intelligence and lexicon. Youth groups have been heavily involved in the creation and testing of the tool and three schools in Melbourne are piloting ~~reword~~.

The technology was created by Leo Burnett Melbourne in partnership with headspace.

Adults and young people alike are being encouraged to download the free tool ahead of 18 March by visiting: http://www.reword.it

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* Social Policy Research Centre, USNW Australia, 2014.
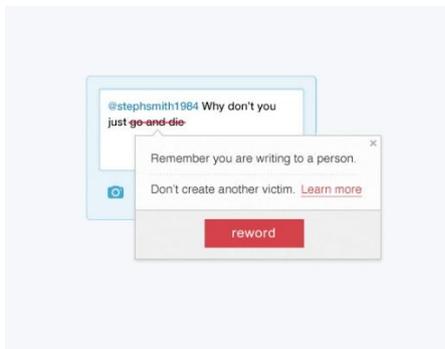**headspace Youth National Reference Group, Aug-Sept 2015.

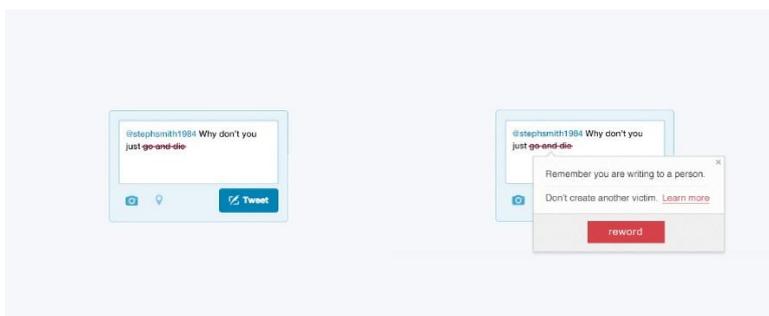# BACKGROUNDER

How it works

1. **Bullying recognised**

2. **Bullying behaviour activates an automatic alert**

3. **Hitting ~~reword~~ selects the statement to be deleted**

4. **Gradually as people become educated by the tool, only the red line appears. Hovering over the red line reveals the alert.**

The technology
The tool uses JavaScript technology to pick up combinations between insults and matching words

to identify tone and intent. When a combination is detected and matched as offensive the user is alerted with the red line of ~~reword~~. Currently the tool is implemented as a Google Chrome Extension with immediate plans to roll out for Safari and Firefox.

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