

WORD OF THE MONTH

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hoon operation (also anti-hoon operation, hooning operation)

- **noun**: a police campaign targeting dangerous drivers.

THE STORY BEHIND THE WORD OF THE MONTH

A 2015 media release by the Queensland Police Service stated:

Police are investigating after a vehicle allegedly evaded them and later crashed at Yatala following a targeted **hoon operation** late last night. (*Australian Government News*, 12 April)

The term **hoon operation**, a targeted police campaign against *hoon* drivers, has recently developed in Australian English, often with the variants **anti-hoon operation** or **hooning operation**. **Anti-hoon operation** was first recorded in 2002, **hoon operation** in 2003, and **hooning operation** in 2009.

The terms seem to be chiefly used in Queensland, suggesting the Queensland police use them to describe their campaigns against dangerous drivers:

In conjunction with the [school holiday] campaign Rockhampton police staged a **hooning operation** last Thursday night. (*Rockhampton Morning Bulletin*, 15 April 2008)

Seven cars have been impounded after their drivers were allegedly drag-racing and doing burnouts on busy main roads. The vehicles were seized for 48 hours when traffic police patrolled the city in unmarked cars as part of an **anti-hoon operation** codenamed Brighton on Thursday night. (*Cairns Post*, 6 December 2008)

More recent evidence suggests such campaigns are also being held elsewhere:

A Bullsbrook man (19) had his car seized and was one of 11 people charged in a police **anti-hoon operation** in Perth's northern suburbs last week. (*Perth Advocate*, 14 March 2012)

The term derives from hoon as a noun meaning 'a young hooligan, especially one who drives a car dangerously or at reckless speed', and as a verb meaning 'to drive or ride recklessly, especially to show off'; both were first recorded in 1988. The word has a longer history in Australian English with several senses developing in the twentieth century. The first sense to develop was that of 'a lout, an exhibitionist', first recorded in 1938 and from which the car-driving sense likely has evolved. The other sense current

in twentieth-century Australian English was 'a pimp', first recorded in 1950.

Hoon has been a productive word in Australian English: *hoondom* and *hoonery* refer to *hoon*-like behaviour, which can also be described as *hoonish*; and a *hoon's* car is sometimes referred to as a *hoonmobile*. Aside from **hoon operations** as a means to curtail dangerous driving, some States have introduced *hoon laws* (also *anti-hoon laws*).

A number of terms relating to *hoon* will be included in the second edition of the *Australian National Dictionary*.



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