

Understanding street racing and 'hoon' culture: An exploratory investigation of perceptions and experiences.

Dr Kerry Armstrong, Mr Dale Steinhardt
Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety – Queensland (CARRS-Q)

Street racing can take the form of spontaneous one-to-one racing or highly organised events, while “hooning” generally refers to activities such as burnouts or excessive acceleration. Recent media reports have highlighted the potential for fatalities or injuries and the public nuisance caused by these behaviours. Subsequently, formal “anti-hooning” legislation has been passed in four Australian states and New Zealand. In the last two years since the introduction of Queensland’s ‘anti-hoon’ legislation, over 1500 vehicles have been impounded and over 4100 disturbance complaints registered. Official Queensland police reports have registered 169 ‘hooning’ or racing crashes involving 12-24 year olds in the period 1999-2004. Current research suggests those involved are typically young males aged between 16 and 25. The current investigation used a combination of focus groups, e-mail responses and message board feedback to conduct an examination of the experiences and perceptions of young people in regards to ‘hooning’ behaviour and legislative reforms. It is proposed that the results can be used to inform existing legislation and the assist in the development of interventions from both a youth and Queensland Police Service perspective.

‘Hooning’ and street racing have gained significant exposure within both print and broadcast media in recent times highlighting it as a dangerous and anti-social behaviour (eg: Dowling, 2004; Edmiston, 2004; English, 2004). Although the terms ‘hooning’, cruising and street racing are used interchangeably at times, they refer to slightly different car-centred activities. Street racing is the act of taking part in a competitive speed challenge between two or more cars, while ‘hooning’ generally refers to activities such as burnouts and unnecessary speeding or acceleration which may take place individually or as part of a group. Having said this, both sets of activities are by definition not mutually exclusive and are often grouped together as an overall set of ‘hoon’ behaviours when used in terms of the targets for recently introduced legislation such as Queensland’s Police Powers and Responsibilities and Another Act, the otherwise labelled ‘anti-hoon legislation’ (Jarred, 2002). For the purposes of this study, both behaviours will be grouped under the term ‘hooning’ except where the report specifically refers to racing or another subset of ‘hooning.’

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ‘HOONS’?

Young, predominantly male drivers in the age range of 16 and 25 years are typically those identified as involved in racing and ‘hooning.’ This is a pattern that has been largely confirmed by research of racers and those congregating around car scenes in Australia, the United States and Finland (Knight, Cook, & Olson, 2004; Leigh, 1996; Vaaranen & Wieloch, 2002). It has been proposed in relation to illegal street racing that it is a relatively transient pastime given the small and young age range in which this behaviour occurs, suggesting that those involved tend to grow out of it after a couple of years (Leigh, 1996). Leigh (1996) has gone further and argued that those involved in these activities are largely mainstream citizens who have an active interest in motor sports. Conversely, others (see Gwinn et al., 2002; Vaaranen & Wieloch, 2002) argue that illegal street racing and social meets are not only associated with criminal activity, but actively encourage and develop it. As such, one pertinent question that remains to be resolved is whether those who engage in these activities are a deviant subculture, are a part of the mainstream car enthusiast culture, or are a mixture of multiple subgroups that entail parts of both.

Queensland Crash Records. Queensland crash data for the years 1999 to 2004, drawn from Queensland Transport’s WebCrash2 database has revealed that ‘hooning related’ activities are problematic on our roads. Results were initially limited to those crashes that had involved drivers between the ages of 12 and 24 (the 12-16 year age group was included to capture 16 year olds), as this is considered to be the target group for this behaviour and this investigation. Previous analyses had also identified only a small number of additional crashes would be added to the sample if a larger age-group extending to the 30 and over age group was included. ‘Hooning-related’ crashes were identified by searching the crash details reports attached to records for mentions of words such as ‘hoon,’ ‘racing,’ ‘burnout,’ and ‘donut’ that are commonly associated with reports of the target behaviours. 169 such crashes were identified after the exclusion of crashes that were either not relevant to ‘hooning’ or where it had only been implied that the behaviour had occurred. Table 1 below presents the distribution of these 169 crashes in relation to the speed limit of the area the crash occurred in and the crash severity.

Table 1: Summary of ‘Hooning related’ crashes, 1999-2004

Speed (km/h)	^a Fatal (%)	^b Hos (%)	^c Med/Inj (%)	^d Prop (%) ^e	Total
≤50	0.0	10 22.2	14 31.1	21 46.7	45
60	5.7	17 19.5	26 29.9	35 44.8	87
70	12.5	50.0	0.0	3 37.5	8
80	9.1	27.3	27.3	36.4	11
100	0.0	14.3	35.7	50.0	14
110	0.0	0.0	50.0	50.0	4
Total	4.1	30 21.3	50 29.6	70 45.0	169

a - Fatal Crash b - Hospitalisation required c - Medical treatment administered / Minor Injury
d - Property damage only e - Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding

A number of significant trends can be identified within this sample. The majority of the crashes (78%) occurred within 60km/hr and lower speed zones, a fact reflected in that nearly 60% of the crashes occurred in metropolitan or hinterland areas. In addition, 72% of the crashes occurred between the afternoon and night time hours of 5pm and 4am. As such, it is apparent that the crash statistics above paint a picture of ‘hooning related’ crashes as largely urban or suburban night time incidents occurring on suburban streets.

WHY ARE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN HOONING?

There are a number of theoretical models that can be applied to explain street racing and ‘hooning’ behaviour; however it is important to note that one theory cannot be all-encompassing. It is important to establish that these behaviours have significant perceived positive outcomes for participants. The act of using the car for such activities is thought to be a means for achieving goals and accomplishments which may otherwise not be achievable. This may take the form of comparatively minor goals such as gaining social status (Vaaranen, 2004) or higher level concerns such as defining one’s self concept (Møller, 2004) and progressing towards more control over one’s life (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002). Likewise, it is arguable that the activities are socially constructed and socially reinforced. Therefore, while macro-level struggles and issues may lead some youth in the direction of these illegal driving activities (Leigh, 1996; Vaaranen & Wieloch, 2002), peer group and parental influences work to reinforce a lifestyle and way of thought that allows these intentions to become a displayed behaviour. Whether this reinforcement takes the form of direct encouragement or not is regarded as unimportant in this current context.

‘ANTI-HOONING’ LEGISLATION

Recently, a number of points have been added to existing legislation in a number of Australian states in order to combat illegal street racing and ‘hooning’. In Queensland, these ‘laws’ are adjustments that have been recently made to the Police Powers and Responsibilities and Another Act that have provided police with the authority to impound vehicles for varying time periods dependent on how many offences have been committed. In Queensland, the legislation specifically targets actions such as dangerous or careless driving, racing or speed trials, and intentionally causing unnecessary noise or smoke as a result of activities like ‘burnouts’ (Jarred, 2002). Available police data indicates that a substantial number of instances of ‘hooning’ or dangerous driving behaviour are taking place on Queensland roads. In the period between November 2002 and September 2004, over 4100 complaints of ‘hoon related’ activities were recorded on the Police traffic complaints system. The majority of these complaints were registered from the South Eastern and North Coast police regions. In relation to actual impoundment figures, 1549 vehicles have been confiscated for first offences, a figure which drops rapidly with only 20 second offence impoundments. A further 3 vehicles have been detected for three or more offences; making the vehicles liable for surrender to the state (Personal Communication, QLD State Traffic Support Branch).

The Tasmanian Police Offences Amendment Bill, 2004 (Office of Parliamentary Counsel, 2004) and the Western Australian Road Traffic Amendment (Impounding And Confiscation Of Vehicles) Act 2004 (Western Australian Office of Road Safety, 2004) set out similar stipulations as those in the Queensland document, forbidding activities such as racing, causing a deliberate loss of traction, or creating unreasonable noise or smoke due to driving. The initial impoundment period in each of these three states for ‘hooning’ is for 48 hours, with the second offence attracting a 3 month impoundment. In the event that a driver commits a third offence, the car will be forfeited to the state. In New South Wales, the Traffic Amendment (Street and Illegal Drag Racing) Act came into effect in December 1996 in an attempt to curtail ‘hooning related behaviour’. In the first six months of operation, 380 offences were registered which contributed to the impoundment of 130 vehicles. As of October 2004, 2000 cars have been confiscated in total (ninemsn.com.au, 2004). The legislation allows for vehicles to be impounded for up to 3 months for a first offence.

New Zealand has also recently introduced its ‘Boy Racer Act’ to combat street racing and related dangerous driving behaviours (New Zealand Police, 2004). The act stipulates against behaviours such as taking part in an illegal street race, or doing ‘donuts’ or other actions that cause a loss of traction or require unnecessary acceleration. The laws give police the power to impound vehicles immediately for 28 days (at the owner’s expense), and to disqualify drivers who take part in racing-related offences. Approximately 2000 vehicles have been impounded in the time up until June, 2004, since the law’s introduction just over a year prior in May of 2003 (*Boy racer seizures top 2000*, 2004).

The key points to be taken from these varying pieces of legislation are that they are explicitly restricting the behaviours of racing, burnouts and other reckless driving. It can be reasonably assumed then that these behaviours are the primary target of such legislation. Across all of the states that have introduced these specific powers, vehicle impoundment and confiscation are the key methods of enforcement currently used.

PURPOSE OF THE CURRENT INVESTIGATION

‘The local car enthusiast and modified car scenes have been identified as the social group involved in the target behaviours in Queensland’s ‘anti-hoon legislation’ (Jarred, 2002). The aim of the current study is to undertake detailed consultation with these groups in the local Brisbane area as to their perspective of the behaviours and their relevant policing, which have not yet been reported in published research. Although all members of

the local scene of car enthusiasts being recruited for this study are not being considered as directly involved in the target activities of hooning or street racing, it is felt they would possess a high level of first-hand knowledge and experience of the activities and the most to potentially gain from direct input into the study.

METHOD

Participants for this investigation were mainly recruited through message board 'posts' to either Queensland-based or Queensland related sections of online 'cruising' and modified car websites. The post was directed at local Brisbane-area enthusiasts, in line with the fact that most crashes and complaints had originated from the South-East metropolitan corner of Queensland. The posts gave a brief background to the purposes of the investigation, calling for participants in the age ranges of 16 to 25 years. Given the general hesitation of participants to be tracked or identified in any fashion, the addresses of websites advertised to are not named within this paper to discourage the seeking of information relating to individuals or the source of any comments made herein.

This recruitment method was chosen to attract participants' as these sites have a large registered user base of mostly young drivers who are involved heavily in the modified car scene. The posts supplied only email and phone contact details for the researchers, which ensured the anonymity of a respondents' identity. Fourteen people participated in one of four focus groups, 12 males and 2 females. Interviews were approximately 120 minutes in length and included semi-structured and open-ended questions. Participants were not asked to provide their names or any demographic information and an inductive approach was used in order to allow interviewers to be flexible in exploring issues and themes as they arose. Although the state of origin for each participant was not verified explicitly each participant spoke of involvement in activities within the local Brisbane or South-East Queensland scene. It is highly unlikely given the central-Brisbane location and the after-hours timing of the focus groups that participants were not based within Queensland and would be regularly subject to other state's legislations.

A number of other interested people who were not able to attend in person provided feedback through phone contact, e-mails and message board posts to raise issues of importance. Of this group, five participated by providing detailed written comments via e-mail and eight participated by providing detailed posts on-line on message boards or by telephone. Again, participants were not asked to provide their names or any demographic information and provided information and feedback on topics of their own choice.

RESULTS

The results of this investigation are presented in a number of sections, each corresponding to the key themes identified through the analysis of the focus groups and other feedback. Six key themes were identified, namely, group processes, defect notices, police attitudes, media perceptions, illegal behaviours and 'anti-hooning' legislation.

Group Processes. Defining who exactly is involved in the scene is considered as a key aim before other issues can be easily understood. As suggested in past research, the group is predominantly male, though it was noted by several participants that there is an increasing number of female drivers attending events. The group is not considered as a unified set of people and can be divided in a number of ways. One such way to sub-classify the group is on the basis of vehicle choice. One male enthusiast noted that "*There are two groups, 'go' or 'show.'* Not many people can afford to have a car that is both spastically fast **and** good looking." This comment highlights the reality that it is difficult to accrue the finances to have a vehicle that is both capable of high powered output and can look highly attractive.

In addition to these two groups, it appears that a further distinction can be made. For instance, one participant noted that both the 'go' and 'show' groups can be further categorised into people who are regarded as "*enthusiasts*" and those that are involved in the antisocial element of activities, namely "*hoons*." This distinction is important because it appears that, for enthusiasts, those who are taking part in the actual 'hooning' activities are usually those who own a car of little monetary value, a car that has been purchased for them, or a car that has been provided to them. According to one participant:

"It's only those that have a shitbox vehicle that are inclined to throw it around and try drifting and throwing burnouts. Those with well done up cars might end up paying \$2000 a year on insurance [for a vehicle] and wouldn't want that going up any more."

Separate to these distinctions, a ubiquitous distinction was made highlighting the existence of what was labelled by two separate individuals as the "*dickhead element*." This group was otherwise referred to as "*bogans*" and "*louts*." This element was considered to be no more than a small group, constituting approximately 10% of the entire population that would be present at a venue on a particular night. Participants distanced themselves from this sub-group, preferring to identify themselves as "*car enthusiasts*." These "*bogans*" and "*louts*." were described as disrespectful not only to the authorities but also to the genuine car enthusiasts. It was reported that these people might ruin a get together or a meet by public displays of "*drunken behaviour*" or "*bad behaviour*." This was reinforced by one participant, who stated:

"... when you are going out and intentionally being in a public place and not doing anything illegal, trying to create a good image for the scene, you then have people who see a whole group of modified cars, they come out do skids, cutting into traffic, and so forth, and the general public sees that and then you have the cops after you all that night and all the next week"

Although this dissident element is attracted to the car scene, it appears that their behaviour is not appreciated, especially in regards to the use of alcohol.

"...they'll go and sit in the middle of you now, thousands and thousands of dollars worth of cars and do burnouts – they get egged on and they think it's cool. So we don't appreciate it at all..."

"....they're there, drinking away, and if you drive through they basically stand in front of you and say 'Do a burnout' 'No I don't want to' ...I've actually seen them stand and grab hold of the cars and start lifting them up and saying 'I'm not letting go until you do a burnout'"

There was also some indication that because someone may currently not be a socially responsible member of the scene, that this will not always be the case. Participants noted how younger members of the scene, including themselves some years ago, were more prone to taking part in inappropriate or illegal behaviours. On the other hand, attention was drawn to the fact that there are 'hoon' drivers who are considerably older.

"(Older driver) can do a handbrakey on the corner... in the middle of town on a Saturday night at 43, I think it's not just us [that's] the problem, it's everybody"

Defect Notices. A key concern that was raised by almost all of those people that provided feedback was the issuing of defect notices. This was a key concern, reiterated a number of times. Problems were identified as to issues with consistency of policing and information availability. While the group as a whole had no problems with being booked for

clearly dangerous modifications, they expressed annoyance with the application of fines and demerit points to minor technicalities. A loss of licence due to a defected vehicle was considered a major concern outweighing any other single issue.

“I don’t have a problem with like say your rear tyres are lowered, sure that can be really dangerous especially if it is wet, if I have illegal tread depth, and a coppa fined, wouldn’t have a problem with it, the issue I have is if you have no water in your washer bottle, or having no H pattern on your gear stick, you know how it has got the gears written, they defect you for that.”

Police discretion was the first major concern raised in regards to defect notices issued. Participants recounted several instances of being cleared of any defects only to be picked up by a different officer on a different occasion.

“...they checked the ride height of the car then and um – that’s all good...and then a year later I went again, um, to Roma Street and a cop on a bike just “ah yeah, your cars too low.”

The timing and appropriateness of defect notices as an enforcement strategy was also brought into question by the groups. Participants reported how “defect stations” had been set up around charity cruises and on exiting legal track race days. A number of participants voiced their concerns that they were being targeted even though they were partaking in organised and approved legal activities. One participant said *“I just wish they wouldn’t target us so much, like after every motor sport event, after every single drifting event that I have ever been to out there, there’s always a been a radar and a defect station on the way home, its ridiculous.”*

The targeting of modified vehicles, particularly those that are driven by younger drivers was also raised as an issue of concern. Particularly, older or more conservative-appearing drivers were inclined to be treated by police with less scrutiny than younger drivers.

P1: “so they drove up in the (imported Japanese model), it’s got fairly dark tinted windows, the police pull them over and he puts down the window, police sees that it’s a 50 year old, and he goes, ‘oh sorry! Have a nice day, drive on’. I mean where’s the justice in that?”

P2: “Yet if it was the son driving, it would have been ‘get out of the vehicle, pop the hood’, and you know.”

The most noticeable and easily identifiable ‘hoon’ cars were considered to be those “showy” vehicles, rather than all vehicles present. An emailed input into this investigation provided a unique perspective on this issue, by drawing the attention to a particular case of someone they knew who had always driven erratically, but had only begun to become more noticed by police since purchasing an imported vehicle. As was stated in one email, *“the car is not the common denominator”,* an *“idiot is an idiot behind the wheel regardless of what car they drive.”*

The desire to have clear and informed advice about vehicle modifications was also of a major concern in relation to defect notices. While what is posted on public forums and discussed between fellow enthusiasts was sometimes considered to be inaccurate or misleading, the official government sources were quoted as providing conflicting advice.

“I’ve found it quite difficult to find someone to go to talk to who knows exactly what the law is on...and just go and ask them, ‘Can I do this to my car and would it be legal?’ ‘Cause there are a lot of people who bullshit you and say ‘Yes, no’ um...”

These concerns were compounded by the reality that vehicle modifications can be expensive and accuracy of information is valuable to assist enthusiasts to correctly uphold the rules. The assistance of local businesses as well in drawing a purchaser's attention to the roadworthy nature of the vehicle was also suggested.

"...a lot of the time people just go to performance shops and get things done to their cars, um, a lot of time they're not told when they're getting things done that's it's going to be illegal and they don't really want to be aware that its illegal either, but its an awareness too I suppose..."

Police Attitudes. Following from the matter of defects, police attitude to the monitoring of the scene was also of a key concern to participants. One participant stated *"There's a real attitude problem with a lot of the police; not all of the police, some of them are fine... it's just a real attitude, power trip that their on, it's not all of them but a great deal of them."* While police presence was not necessarily seen as an imposition, police 'interference' with events and get togethers was met with resistance. The role of police and authorities was expressed by participants as one where they could or should play a greater role in reducing the influence of the "dickhead element" without targeting everyone for congregating together and issuing defect notices for minor defect issues.

P1: "...there needs to be somewhere with a police presence, where the police aren't gonna pick on everybody but they're there to keep it under control, make sure there's no like people drinking in public or doing burnouts or whatever..."

P2: "Be there for us, not against us"

...

DS: So just on that thing, what can we do to get rid of the, what do you call it, the dickhead element? We've heard that twice now.... [laughing]

P1: Actually get the police in there to enforce no alcohol or drinking....

GROUP: Yeah, yeah!!!

P2: Like, cars and alcohol don't mix....

P3: Don't mix at all....

Instead, the group felt that they were being pigeon-holed as trouble-makers regardless of whether they were involved in illegal behaviours. However, one particular participant did recall how certain meeting areas have worked effectively in the past when collaborating with police and other authorities. Further, it was suggested that a common understanding of trust could be reached between enthusiasts and police if people were allowed to get together or participate in events if they did not act illegally or socially irresponsible.

"We as car enthusiasts are stereotyping police as well as the police stereotyping us. Um, we're both guilty of it and obviously we need to both come to some sort of agreement and co-operate in tackling the hooning issue."

....

"...you need to kinda get a kinda bond of trust between hoons and police. Say if you go out to Maccas or whatever there be an understanding where the police won't defect us, if we don't do anything wrong. Like if we just rock up have a chat, go home, and don't do anything stupid they should leave us alone instead of defecting us left right and centre. Um, so you know, we need somewhere to be able to meet without the cops drilling us all the time if we're not doing anything wrong."

A number of participants mentioned that it would be of great benefit if there was a forum or official contact through which they could voice concerns and ask questions without the fear of retribution. It was mentioned that people within the scene are "paranoid as hell" about police and government intervention and were becoming more secretive and

distanced from involvement in formal events as a result. These suggestions point to enthusiasts wishing to be involved more closely in police and official decision-making, without thinking that they are going to be targeted or booked for asking a question. One participant stated “...if they’re [the police] willing to come and talk to us, I am sure that there are a helluva lot of people who would love to have to opportunity to sit down with, whoever you sit down with, and talk it out like adults.”

Media - “Don’t Let The Truth Get In The Way Of A Good Story.” Media representation of the modified car scene was also commonly raised as an issue causing much frustration and debate. The stereotypes presented in sensationalist television current affairs shows were sighted by enthusiasts as one of the key reasons behind the breakdown of relations between police and the community in general.

DS: What do you think your view is out in the general public?

P1:- *We’re up there with rapists [Group laughs]*

P2: *They just think anyone with a hotted up car goes out and does burnouts, drives ridiculous, goes high speed sort of racing everything like*

P3: *We’re meant to be more dangerous than a killer*

P1: *Yeah, [name of TV program] connected like hoons last week with like a homicide.*

As these negative portrayals are primarily the only representation the group is given in the media, it is felt that the group is not given an official voice to respond to allegations.

“ Like you know with [specific charity cruise] we put [it] out [to] a whole lot of newspapers, TV shows and whatever to see if they wanted to cover it or be involved and they wouldn’t even look at it.”

Further to this issue, participants stated that they had personally or knew of someone who had been targeted by the media and offered money or other incentives such as being a part of a ‘Fast and the Furious’ type movie only to find that soon after they were involved in a story regarding ‘hoons’ out of control on Australian roads.

“The camera crew will hit people up for; actually give them money to do a burnout in front of them.”

Illegal Behaviours. Discussion of illegal behaviours was seen as a junction between attributing dangerous behaviour to particular subsets of the group as well as pointing to reasons as to why people feel they have no place to legally engage in the behaviours. Although a number of the group admitted that they had committed driving offences including unnecessary speeding, they stated that there was a “*time and place.*”

P1: *“I suppose time and place is what it is really about, and that’s the difference between I suppose a lot of enthusiasts and hoons is that they’re doing it for attention and without regard to a lot of other [people] that come into it, I mean I’ll drive for 3 hours to go out where there aren’t any other people, where I can see for kilometres and I will have 3 other cars parked at different parts of the road so we can tell there’s no-one who can come along who can get hurt, um and someone else in the car a passenger always on the phone, so that if there is an obstacle coming up I can pull over, um and it is still I suppose illegal, but it is taking a lot of precaution to stop other people getting hurt.”*

P2: *“Right place, right time”*

In response to suggestions that legal track events are the place for such activities, a number of barriers were raised as to the feasibility of this behaviour. While there is a large

number of local people that are interested in formal track driving, there is a widespread opinion that there are not enough locations or occasions that are available to allow people to take part. Likewise, the level of expense incurred by taking part in race days is a concern.

“[Track racing is] just a hugely expensive sort of thing. If you took obviously those fire proof suits and everything there gonna, but then divide that by the amount of days that you are going to do it’s an expensive exercise to get off the street. And you’ve kinda gotta make a committed decision that yeah this is the road I want to go and for me racing on the street just isn’t my cup of tea but I can understand why so many people aren’t racing on the track, the way it’s going.....the amount of money, they could spend that money on their car.”

It was suggested by most of the participants that subsidising entry to track racing, drifting events or any other track event would reduce the likelihood of people engaging in illegal street racing or ‘hooning’ activities. As noted by one participant, *“...if it [organised track events] was on a regular basis and I think if it was set up, it might minimise [the hooning related activities] actually happening on the streets and out near street houses and things like that...”* While this idea was proposed by enthusiasts themselves it is important to note that this possible solution could become problematic if authorities used such events as opportunities to set up ‘defect stations’ in order to assess vehicles leaving the premises.

“They tell you to go to um, proper motor sports events or whatever but there was a drift day a little while ago... the cops had set up a defect station on the way out and drilled everybody as they left. Like you get in trouble for driving on the street, you get in trouble for driving on the track, like what are you supposed to do, not drive at all?”

‘Anti-hooning’ legislation. As with the defect notices, it was felt that there is too much uncertainty in terms of what is considered illegal or warrants being charged under the ‘anti-hoon’ legislation. The need for an independent regulator, as well as clearer and publicly available guidelines for the legislation, were suggested. The use of discretion between officers of whether a behaviour could be *“reasonably considered”* to be ‘hooning’ was perceived as a concern in terms of the currently tense relationship between the scene and authorities.

It had previously been stated to the researchers from discussions outside the focus groups that those charged under ‘anti-hooning’ legislation considered the loss of their vehicle as a ‘badge of honour’. This suggestion was refuted by the participants of the current investigation. While they agreed that fines, demerit points and licence suspension were all valid enforcement measures, the impoundment of vehicles was thought to be too harsh a penalty, especially in light of the previous concerns about discretion.

P1: “I don’t think I’ve ever been away from my car for 48 hours and I wonder how would I feel about that and secondly if it was like somewhere where I wasn’t sort of you know within like walking distance of it like...nah....”

P2: “It’s amazing the effect it [the car] has on your life.”

The group also felt that car enthusiasts were the only group being targeted by the ‘anti-hooning’ legislation. It was argued that if the whole community of vehicles of all ages and types were scrutinised to the same level as that of the modified car community, then the legislation would not be so well accepted.

“It sucks getting picked on, but some cars you look at them and you go “well that’s not really safe to be driven”... I’d rather drive a car that’s got bigger wheels and tyres and better brakes and whatever, um, even if it’s 90 mills off the ground than

instead of 100 – um, compared to like a stock VT commodore with over inflated, bald tyres in which most people get around in – it's just ridiculous that we get picked on so much, when generally our cars are better maintained ...than everybody else's...”

DISCUSSION

This exploratory investigation provides an insight into the modified car scene and contributes towards a further understanding of a number of issues relating to ‘hooning behaviour’ and related enforcement. Whilst the authors acknowledge that those who have so far responded to the call to participate are likely to be the more socially-conscious or civilly interested members of the scene, the current investigation has identified that there are numerous subgroups that have all previously been labelled under the broad category of ‘hoon’. Further, it appears that those who are engaging in illegal ‘hooning’ related activities are not representative of the overall car modification group. It is becoming apparent that it is a group of dissidents within this larger group who are ruining the scene for the majority who wish to come together in support of their common interest – motor vehicles. The cohort of enthusiasts who participated in the current investigation appears disheartened that this demarcation has not been appropriated by authorities and media alike. It is important that those who are a part of this scene be involved in any countermeasures designed to curb the issue of ‘hooning related behaviours’ as they have a wealth of first-hand knowledge and experiences. It is also proposed that garnering the support of the people involved in this scene would be crucial in order to implement any intervention and facilitate appropriate change management to reduce the incidence of ‘hooning’ activities. It is arguable that any intervention would require the support of car enthusiasts themselves as it appears that they feel as a collective group their voice has repeatedly been unheard within legislative and media circles. Finally, it is important to note that while this investigation does not attempt to dispel the currently held viewpoint that there are dangerous or irresponsible ‘hoons’ on the road, it is anticipated that the feedback received thus far can contribute to addressing concerns from within the scene about ways that it may be improved.

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