

Husband-and-wife team takes green approach to carpet cleaning



After recognising a growing demand for green cleaning services in homes, husband-and-wife cleaning team Mario and Maryanne Muscat pursued their dream and opened the doors to Organic Carpet Cleaning (OCC). Based in Horsley Park, the company only uses organic and chemical-free products to clean carpets and upholstery. **Mario** and **Maryanne** spoke with INCLEAN's assistant editor Lizzie Hunter about their move to organic cleaning and how their small start-up is already growing in a tough market.

After working for more than 12 years in the cleaning industry servicing both commercial and domestic clients, Maryanne and Mario Muscat decided it was time to find a more natural approach to cleaning.

"It just made sense to find a natural and organic cleaning solution," shared Maryanne. "Mario began experiencing severe headaches when we were cleaning with toxins, bleach and other chemicals, so we figured if the chemicals were affecting him that badly, it definitely couldn't be good for our clients."

"Funnily enough, a lady who used to work with us introduced us to an old client who made organic cleaning products. We started using his products and haven't looked back since."

Since starting their business three years ago, the couple has built up a strong client base through recommendations and word-of-mouth referrals. They currently service clients in and around the eastern suburbs of Sydney, the central coast and the northern beaches.

"We travel all over Sydney to clean," said Mario. "But if we're asked to do a job in Wollongong, we'll go there too."

The company provides domestic carpet cleaning services; upholstery cleaning services; dust mite treatments; air conditioning filter sanitation and deodorisation; vehicle cleaning and one-off cleaning. OCC's cleaning products are organic, free from harsh chemicals and are developed using pure eucalyptus, rosemary and citronella essential oils.

"We're the only organic carpet cleaner that we know of in

Australia," stated Mario. "We receive phone calls from all over the country, including Perth, Melbourne and Queensland, asking for our services."

While the husband-and-wife team would like to start a franchise one day, they have intentionally kept the business small to ensure every client receives an efficient and thorough cleaning service.

"We haven't employed other workers so we can continue to provide a more personalised cleaning experience," explained Maryanne. "Because it's our own business, we also spend a bit more time ensuring the job is done properly."

"A lot of people don't like strangers cleaning their house," added Mario. "So I think our clients like that they know who is coming to clean their houses since they've spoken to the cleaners (us) directly on the phone."

When asked about the challenges the pair have faced since joining the carpet cleaning industry, it is clear that one particular issue immediately springs to mind.

"Stains," respond Mario and Maryanne simultaneously.

"Getting stains out can be so hard sometimes," laughed Maryanne. "Because we only use natural products, there is only so much we can do as cleaners. Some stains come out straight away and others don't."

"Some stains are going to be a challenge for every cleaner, no matter what kind of product they're using," added in Mario, who has learnt from experience that it is often better to tell clients that some stains just won't come out.

"People appreciate when you're honest," he explained. "If you do your best and the carpet has been cleaned, a lot of them aren't too fussed."

"When I quote clients, I tell them that we can't guarantee that stains will come out," said Maryanne. "Most of them are just happy knowing that they're carpet has been cleaned and that no chemicals have been used in the process."

While OCC has established that the target market for organic cleaning services is mainly couples with young families and pets, people who suffer from allergies and the elderly, Mario admitted that finding people who are solely after an organic cleaning solution can be a challenge.

"Some people ring us just to get a quote. They don't care if the service is organic or not, they're just after something cheap," he elaborated. "But then there are others who are conscious about what goes into their home."

"A lot of people haven't cleaned their carpets before because they don't like the chemicals," shared Maryanne. "Then you have other people who have cleaned their carpet with chemicals, but then ask us to clean the carpets again to wash the chemicals out because the smell makes them feel sick."

After only three years, OCC has grown into a carpet cleaning business that is recognised and sought after by many around Australia. And while there are no imminent plans set in stone just yet for the company, the future looks quite bright.

"We enjoy meeting new people and seeing the benefits cleaning with organic products can create, such as improvement in air quality," stated Maryanne. "We're really happy with what we're doing right now. It's natural and organic and since a lot of people are going that way now, we think it is the way to go."

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