



## TOAST of the town

A Dalby cleaning business in regional Queensland has received a string of awards on the back of its strong team culture and commitment to clients. **Cameron Cooper** reports.

For someone who still thinks he is getting his head around the cleaning industry, Scott MacDougall appears to be faring well.

At the 2018 BSCAA Queensland Excellence Awards late last year, staff members of Scott and Sharryn MacDougall's commercial and industrial cleaning business, Town & Country Cleaning, claimed three awards. No bad for an operation that had never participated in the awards before.

Scott and Sharryn bought the cleaning company about four-and-a-half years ago because of concerns over market fluctuations in the agricultural sector, in which they had forged a presence selling GPS equipment to farmers.

"To buy a cleaning business was completely left field," Scott explains. "It's taken me a number of years to learn how it all operates. And I'm still learning."

That did not stop Town and Country Cleaning gaining market recognition at the BSCAA awards. Employee Christine Phillips, in the Queensland-wide division, was named runner-up for Long Service, a category open to those who have been in the industry for more than 10 years.

Tina Draney took the prize in the Frontline Employee category in the regional Queensland division, which recognises an individual's outstanding professional success. Catherine DeVries, Bebe Antoja and Sandra Radke were winners in the Most Valuable Team category in the regional Queensland division.

Without knowing much about the awards process, MacDougall had nominated his team members and hoped for the best. He and Sharryn then travelled down Brisbane without staff for the event, not really expecting the company to be in the awards mix.

To his surprise, MacDougall had to go on stage three times to collect the gongs.

"I took all the accolades," he laughs, adding that he passed on the good news to his team the next day. "None of the staff had any idea. They were a little dumbfounded."

### Growing reputation

Town and Country Cleaning is no overnight success. Founded in 1988 by a local couple, the MacDougalls bought it in the knowledge that it had significant potential and have built staff numbers since the takeover from 24 to about 40 people, most of whom are permanent staff members.

MacDougall reflects the agricultural business has always been buffeted by market fluctuations because of harsh weather conditions and significant competition.

"One month I need four people and the next month there's not enough work for one. It's just up and down too much. That's the reason we needed to diversify."

By contrast, the cleaning market in Dalby, a town in the Darling Downs region of Queensland, benefits from the presence of a number of industries, including agriculture, energy, mining, engineering, education and healthcare.

While a slowdown in work related to gas-fired power in the region has had an impact, the embrace of renewable energy projects has given Dalby a boost. Town and Country Cleaning relies on commercial and industrial cleaning work for about 80 per cent of its revenue, while carpet and floor cleaning dominates the remainder of the portfolio. MacDougall believes the BSCAA awards demonstrate that his business is benefiting from a strong workplace culture.

"I try to make it inclusive for our employees. Whenever we do quotes we try to make sure staff are involved. And we also make sure staff get positive feedback for their work."

“To buy a cleaning business was completely left field. It’s taken me a number of years to learn how it all operates. And I’m still learning.”

### Healthy culture

One of the most prestigious BSCAA awards went to DeVries, Antoja and Radke for their cleaning work at the Myall Medical Practice, a large clinic of GPs in Dalby.

The contract requires a team of at least three cleaners to work from about 6pm to 10pm most nights, with rigorous standards applying in the healthcare sector.

“The practice needs to be as-new every morning. No wall marks, no glass marks, and the floors have to be buffed and polished very week. I can’t speak highly enough of the team.”

One of the keys to success for Town and Country Cleaning, according to MacDougall, is that staff members are routinely exposed to different team leaders and projects so they understand the requirements of a range of jobs and can apply consistent cleaning methods.

“They’re effectively ready to go as a reserve if someone is sick or on holidays.”

Given its large cleaning team and diverse job list, MacDougall says his biggest challenge is managing rosters. Once done on a spreadsheet, he has moved to a mobile app solution that allows management and staff to be on top of jobs at any point of the day.

“We only started that in late January, but it’s already been a great help,” he says.

MacDougall thinks the management skills he has acquired over the years in the agricultural sector have served him well in the cleaning sector.

“My skill is in managing people, rather than my cleaning skills. I get told at home pretty regularly that I’m a poor cleaner,” he jokes.

Part of MacDougall’s management approach is to quickly address client concerns on the rare occasions that they occur. He joins his team members to “eyeball” any clients with issues so problems can be identified and fixed.

### Bright future

With a strong back-office team and dedicated cleaning staff, Scott has no doubt that Town and Country Cleaning is well placed to thrive in the years to come.

The job for him and Sharryn will be to make sure that clients are satisfied, employees take ownership of what they are doing, and that they dot the i’s and cross the t’s when it comes to staff needs around pay and workplace conditions.

“That’s the key,” he says. “If people are happy at work, it makes everything with the business a lot easier.”



**erGO! clean**  
**UNGER**  
Quality Tools for Smart Cleaning

**Get the S-Factor**

**SPEED**  
**STRAIN-FREE**  
**SAFETY**  
**SMART**

**A floor cleaning system so great  
you'll be singing its praises!**

Contact our friendly team to learn how erGO! clean can benefit your business.

[www.pallmall.com.au](http://www.pallmall.com.au)

Ph: 02 9584 8644 E: [enquiries@pallmall.com.au](mailto:enquiries@pallmall.com.au)



Exclusive Australian distributors.