

# Daily Mercury

Saturday, February 9 and Sunday, February 10, 2019 \$2.00\*

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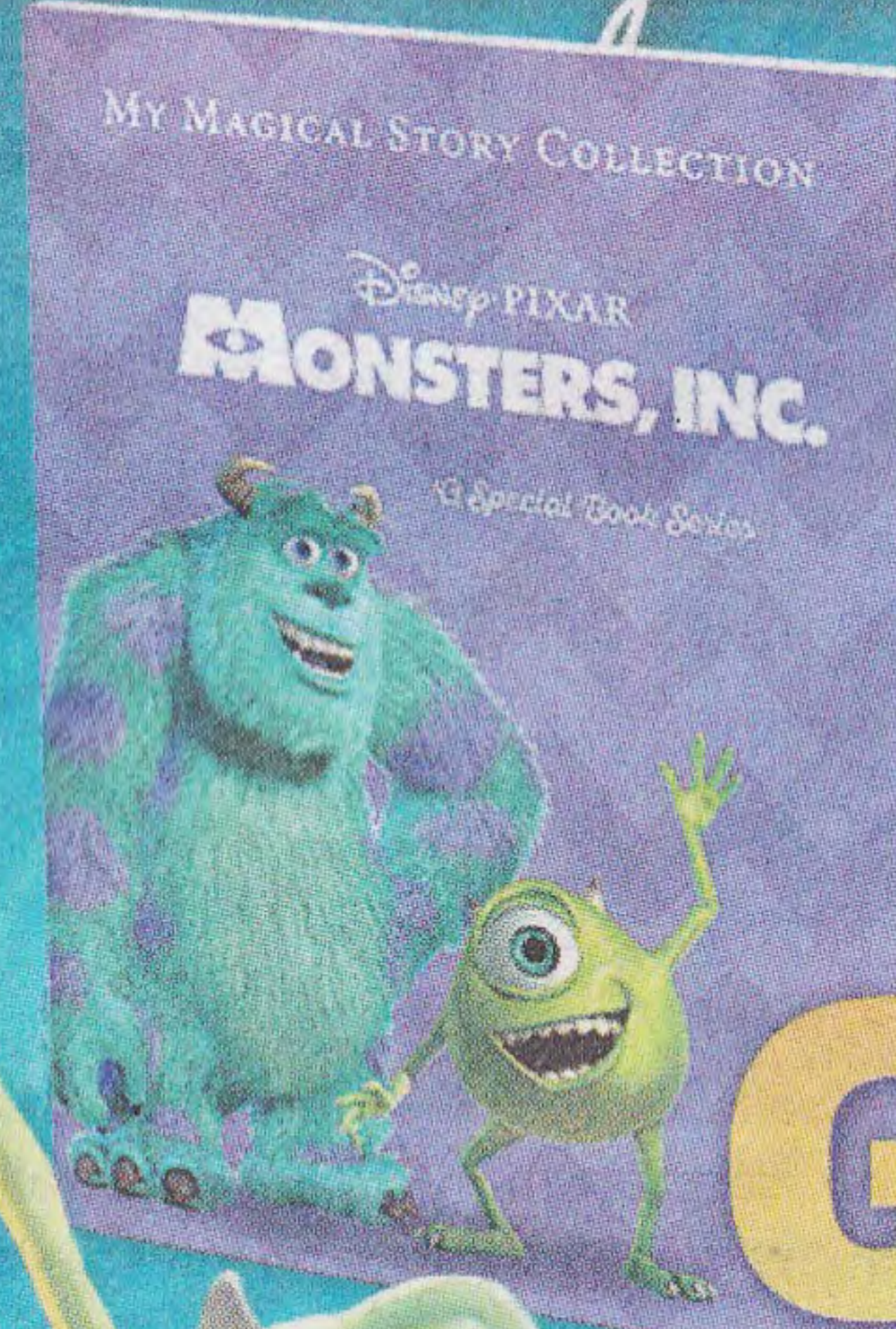
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## ROMANCE IN THE RAINFOREST

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AFTER LOSING EVERYTHING  
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# OUR TOXIC DARK SIDE

## Unsung heroes clean up

RAINEE SHEPPERSON

THEY are the unlikely heroes of Mackay.

They walk into toxic environments every day and do the jobs no one wants to do.

But these men in white suits usually fly under the radar.

They clean up when someone dies, remove meth residue from walls and transform hoarders' wastelands into liveable houses.

FULL STORY PAGES 6-7



Crime scene cleaner  
Scott McFadzen  
Photo: Daniel McKenzie

## BACK OUR SUBBIES

### Win for tradies is only the first step in battle

A PUBLIC court examination will be held into the collapse of Rockhampton-based JM Kelly Builders Pty Ltd with witnesses to include company director John Murphy in a bid to obtain information to support potential civil and criminal claims.

Building industry regulator, the QBCC, announced the \$200,000 funding came after talks with the liquidator PwC and follows what it says have been months of talks. The public examination is expected to be completed within six months.

Stories, pages 4 and 5

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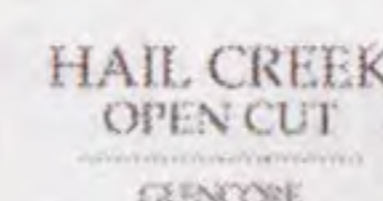
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# A look behind

## From meth labs to murders, they see Mackay's darkest side

**RAINEE SHEPPERSON**

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THEY are the unlikely heroes of Mackay.

They walk into toxic environments every day and do the jobs no one wants to do.

But these men in white suits usually fly under the radar.

They clean up when someone dies, remove meth residue from walls and transform hoarders' wastelands into livable houses — dodging needles and rodents in their path.

These tasks come part and parcel for the Mackay crime and trauma cleaners.

Business owner Scott McFadzen said there was no doubt it was a confronting job.

The *Daily Mercury* sat down with the Mackay local to discuss the details normally kept behind closed doors.

### Meth labs

The demand for meth testing was on the rise, Mr McFadzen said.

With an increase in the number of meth laboratories in the area, the importance of clearing homes of meth resid-

ue is vital. Meth testing is the first step, followed by a remediation action plan.

"We work closely with the police and real estate companies when dealing with meth residue," Mr McFadzen said.

"If there has been a meth lab, it's highly volatile so the police go in first and remove the utensils and clear the site.

"We go into the home and swab the aircons, the walls, above the oven, the sink, the laundry and the hallways.

"Testing for meth is so important because it's the type of residue that will stay in your house forever if not cleaned correctly.

"Being around meth residue can cause illness and even ADHD-like symptoms, it's extremely toxic."

Mr McFadzen suggested renters and home buyers look out for strange yellow staining on walls or an unusual odour when entering a house.

"The residue will stick to you and cause nausea, dizziness and headaches," he said.

### Squalor & hoarders

If you have watched the show



Hoarders on television, you would already have a brief insight into the state of homes Mackay crime and trauma cleaners often tackle.

Squalors, though, they are "another kettle of fish", Mr McFadzen said.

A squalor is usually defined as someone that can no longer look after themselves, they may have a mental disability

and their house has gone into a state of severe disarray.

Mr McFadzen and his team have been attending hoarders and squalors homes in the Mackay region for more than 15 years.

"There is normally faecal waste on the floor, sometimes buckets of waste kept in a room, a toilet that hasn't been working for months but is still



**NEW FAD:** Op shop's are getting more donations than usual as people ask themselves 'does this spark joy?' Photo: Kate Rasmussen

## KonMari fills local second-hand shops

AS HOUSEHOLDS across the city tune in to Netflix each night, one trending show is making a huge impact on people's lives.

Marie Kondo is the name on everybody's lips, and the tidying guru is inspiring people to declutter and organise their homes.

Her book, *The Life-changing Magic of Cleaning Up*, and the subsequent television show *Tidying up with Marie Kondo* has followers all around the world throwing out their possessions, one category at a time, if they no longer spark joy for the owner.

The trend has hit Mackay's thrift and second-hand shops, as

people pour in to donate items that no longer serve them.

Tammie Lewis, site manager at Incredible, has noticed a change in donations.

She said more and more people had been donating high-quality goods at the store, and agreed that was probably because of the popularity of the TV show.

"We've had a lot of people bringing in tea sets, and there's a whole box of grandma jewellery out the back," Tammie said.

People have also been getting rid of things like old kids toys, bikes, bedding and kitchenware.

"We are happy to take people's unwanted goods."



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# closed doors



**DIRTY JOB:** Crime scene cleaner Scott McFadzen deals with rubbish, faeces and other unpleasant waste in his line of work. Photo: Daniel McKenzie

one has recently died is the most graphic side of the job for Mr McFadzen and his team.

"Crime and trauma clean up is not something everyone can do, it's very confronting," Mr McFadzen said.

"When the undertakers remove a body, there are still fragments and remaining body parts that we sometimes need to remove.

"If someone has been decomposing, it will affect the entire home.

"The fluids attract flies and maggots, so we have to clean wherever the flies have been tracking.

"We often have to remove pieces of the floor or walls because they can't be salvaged."

From blood seeping into the cracks of a home to skull pieces embedded in walls, Mr McFadzen said it was a graphic job.

He said it was important to "switch off" at the end of each day.

"I've got a really good wife and we make sure to talk about what I've seen," he said.

"If you don't treat it like just another job, you would never cope."

being used," Mr McFadzen said.

"We wear full PPE (personal protective equipment) because there is often used needles, sanitary items and even old catheter bags lining the floor."

Hoarders can often be sneaky, Mr McFadzen said.

"They normally hide their problem from their family," he said.

"You will go into a house and open the door and it's completely full to the ceiling of rubbish. But to the owner, it's their possessions.

"Because of all the rubbish, we normally find there will be masses of cockroaches, rats and other rodents living in the house."

On a recent job, Mr McFadzen attended a house where 54

cats, dogs, chooks and ducks were living.

"The house was littered with poo from all of the animals, it completely covered the floor," Mr McFadzen said.

"There were children living in the house too and that's what made it quite sad."

**Trauma and death**

Cleaning a home where some-



**KONMARI:** Tanuja Chopra, with Keya Chopra, has used the KonMari method to de-clutter her home. Photo: Kate Rasmussen

## De-cluttering brings joy to family homes

MARIE Kondo's book *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up* was a trend long before her hit Netflix television show began helping people improve their quality of life.

Her book and the sequel, *Spark Joy*, ask readers to gather their belongings, one category at a time, and then keep only the things that spark joy.

Tanuja Chopra, a Mackay mother who migrated from India in December last year with her husband and daughter, said Marie Kondo's method made it easier to minimise their possessions when they moved internationally.

"We only had a small weight limit so everything

we brought had to have meaning or use," Mrs Chopra said.

"Two years after our wedding I realised we had lots of stuff that was very traditional, and didn't suit us, so we threw it away."

Mrs Chopra said throwing away gifts and sentimental items was hard, but the benefits had been huge for the small family.

"I did feel guilty, and I was kind of scared, but it had to be done because you have to shed the load if it doesn't give you joy," she said.

Mrs Chopra said having no clutter made it easier to clean and left more time for her to spend time with her partner and baby.

- Kate Rasmussen



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