

Murders mopped up!

When detectives move on from the crime scene, Pam and Bronwyn move in – to clean up the mess

The smell is usually atrocious, but Pam Marsden and Bronwyn Ward have become accustomed to cleaning up the gore after someone dies.

Mass murders, suicides, decompositions – the two Sydney women will scrub away the blood, mop up the bodily fluids, remove the stench of decay, even dispose of soiled furnishings or linen. They sanitise the death scene.

“We literally do the forensic restoration,” says Pam. “We get all the contamination out.”

The former nurses formed their business, BVM Clean Scene, 16 months ago after discovering nobody else was tackling the gruesome job. They get calls from all around Australia.

“We’re the pioneers,” Bronwyn says. “We found out that police would often clean up because they felt sorry for relatives, but they’re not geared up for that sort of thing. Otherwise, it was the families themselves who had to deal with it.

“When we arrive the forensic people have been through, any evidence has been removed and the police have released the scene.”

Pam adds: “There’s no body there. Any body parts have been removed. There might be fragments of bone but the big bits have gone. There’s just the mess. There may be bodily fluid and often blood. We’ve seen buckets of it.

“Domestic cleaners certainly won’t touch contaminated, hazardous waste such as blood, but we work in the pathology industry and as nurses we understand about infection control,” Pam says. When working, the two wear disposable overalls with a hood attached, gumboots, three pairs of gloves, a face mask and goggles.

The women won’t talk about crime scenes they’ve worked at for fear of offending victims’ relatives but one of their jobs was cleaning up after Sydney’s notorious Blackmarket Cafe shooting



The team at work. Left: Unmasked, Bronwyn (left) and Pam.

last year, when three men were shot dead in a bikie dispute. “We get calls

from all over – from relatives, property managers, whoever owns the premises,” Pam says. “Our workload is increasing as more people realise we’re here. We do the jobs no one else will take on.”

Cleaning a death scene can take anything from hours to days. “One bathroom in the country took two days,” Bronwyn says. “A family had been murdered and it was a very big job.

“We’ve been upset if the crime is domestic violence or involves children. We did one in Albury (NSW) where the murder victim had tried to get to the telephone and plug the jack back in.

“There was blood all over the ‘0’ on the phone dial and that really got to us. The murders are awful but you can’t afford to get too emotionally involved.”

What happens when people learn of their line of work? “Some are horrified but they recover quickly and want to know all the gory details,” Pam says. “Most people have a macabre interest in death.”

Denise Kenny