

For Koala Eco, Accessibility Means Using Healthier, More Sustainable Everyday Cleaners

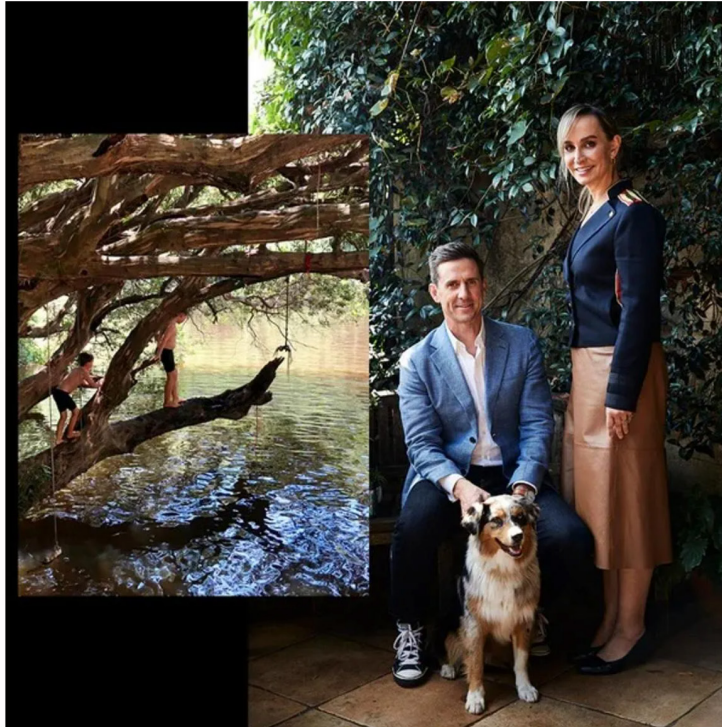
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Jessica Bragdon and Paul Davidson co-founded Koala Eco. KOALA ECO

Last October, I [published a story](#) with the founders of [Branch Basics](#). The company sells a concentrate that, when mixed with water, morphs into cleaning solutions which are environmentally-friendly, non-toxic, and fragrance-free. As I wrote, as a disabled person with respiratory sensitivity, that Branch Basics makes their cleaners fragrance-free is a big deal because my lungs won't suffer using them. Better still, that people can order online and have products shipped directly to their doorstep means somebody like me—whose ability to get around to brick-and-mortar stores is hindered by my multitude of disabilities and lack of personal transport—can have accessibility in more ways than one.

So it goes for [Koala Eco](#).

The Australia-based Koala Eco shares a similar conceit to Branch Basics, insofar as both aspire to create cleaning solutions that are healthier for the environment and the human body. Koala Eco was founded in 2017 by the husband-and-wife team of Jessica Bragdon and Paul Davidson after their eldest son, Arthur, was born with a rare and often fatal form of childhood cancer called [neuroblastoma](#). The couple, always health-conscious in terms of diet and exercise, started to wonder about the effects of the cleaning solutions they sprayed around the house. After Arthur's cancer treatments, Bragdon and Davidson resolved to be even more devoutly health-conscious; better still, the oils found in Australia are naturally anti-microbial. Given these factors, the proverbial spark was lit to make a better line of household cleaners that were healthier and didn't contain any of the harmful chemicals used by most

"Our consumer is the conscious consumers that are looking for products that are safe to use, but they're also very efficacious," Bragdon said to me about her company's *raison d'être* in a recent interview via videoconference. "We're a company that cares—we're not a greenwashing company. We give back to mental health initiatives [and] connect people to nature. We don't use any new plastic; all of our plastic is 100% recycled and recyclable. We also have concentrates and refill options as well as glass. We sort of tick all those boxes: being a company that really is doing the right thing and making a difference [and] our connection to the mental health benefits. It's not only incredibly important to us as founders, it's also important as an organization."

Bragdon's twin sister, Adrienne, agreed.

Adrienne, who serves as Koala Eco USA's managing director, explained their mother, who lives in Boston, copes with contact dermatitis and therefore is extremely sensitive to most household cleaning products. Koala Eco makes cleaners she can use due to them being naturally formulated. Adrienne said the Food and Drug Administration, or FDA, doesn't regulate what constitutes so-called "natural" fragrances, so most of the time the scents are synthetic. The dish soap, Adrienne explained, is safe enough and smells lovely enough to even use as a body wash. She added "all of our products" have been designed around that philosophy of gentility, which is a break from mainstream products which she described as "incredibly irritating" for those, like her mom, who must deal with contact dermatitis or another type of skin sensitivity.

"We're really conscious about using the best ingredients and using the cleanest ingredients, making sure that we are always use best practice in that regard," Adrienne said.

As to sourcing, Jessica explained she and her husband have longstanding relationships with the essential oil farms in Australia. It was important, she said, for them to work directly with suppliers so they could see firsthand what kinds of oils they're getting. Moreover, Jessica said the team is "extremely fortunate" to have a family friend who is a chemist. Together, she said, everyone works hard to ensure "our formulations are as efficacious and as clean as possible." Adrienne seconded her sister's sentiments, saying the formulations are not only important from a health standpoint, but the aromatherapy benefits are big as well. More pointedly, she said there's a high level of self-assurance and peace of mind knowing one can be cleaning their home with products made ethically and aren't harmful to them and their loved ones.

Adrienne was forthright in telling me it's "quite shameful" how the FDA doesn't regulate the cleaning (and cosmetic) industries. For her part, Jessica told me there are organizations, including "small disruptor brands" in the cleaning and beauty spaces like Koala Eco, who are "starting to change the tide on what people want and what people expect [from these kinds of products] and how companies should operate."

To reiterate what I wrote in the lede (and in my Branch Basics piece), that Koala Eco does this work to create more healthful household cleaners is not some fanciful, hippie ideal. Especially for those in the disability community, chronic conditions such as respiratory sensitivities and skin conditions are disabling all their own and require constant maintenance. This is not trivial; disabled people clean their homes too, and it's very plausible that a Koala Eco or its ilk can be an alternative to other commercial brands. What's more, Koala Eco is advantageous from a technological perspective in that, again, a person can order online—using an accessible and privacy-conscious form of payment like Apple Pay, no less—and have the items sent directly to their doorstep. All told, Koala Eco absolutely represents accessibility in more ways than one.

When asked about feedback, Jessica said Koala Eco has garnered "thousands and thousands" of 5-star reviews, adding the company's products has been highlighted in such high-profile places as Gwyneth Paltrow's [Goop](#), Oprah, and *Vanity Fair*. The positive reception to Koala Eco's work, Jessica added, gives the team motivation to "get up each day and do what we're doing." Adrienne concurred, saying "the proof is in the pudding" and added the products "smell amazing and they work."

Looking towards the future, the Bragdon sisters told me they want Koala Eco to push ahead and keep the momentum going. Jessica was succinct in saying the overarching goal is to "continue developing incredible products that that people need" all the while "give back as much as we can." Adrienne agreed, telling me she personally thinks of the first rule of the [Hippocratic Oath](#) that says "do no harm." For Koala Eco's future, Adrienne wants to be more eco-conscious in terms of packaging and maybe someday open a physical retail store for customers to visit.

"That would be a dream," she said.