

Chandelier retailer saw the light

Claire Heaney

IT'S hard to believe that in these days of minimalist decor that chandeliers are still hanging around.

They hark back to a bygone era, but John Halloran says there are still plenty to be found — and he should know.

One year ago Mr Halloran established a business specialising in cleaning chandeliers. He had been working in lighting retail and believed there was a niche market for cleaning chandeliers.

A year on, the business is meeting his expectations. It's not quite full-time but he can work around his other job, driving a school bus. It also means he can juggle the demands of being a sole parent to his 17-year-old son, who is currently studying VCE.

Mr Halloran says he decided to look at starting his own business when his wife died several years ago.

"I had cleaned that many chandeliers in my 20 years in lighting retail and people kept asking, 'Who cleans chandeliers?' and I just decided it was a niche market," he said.

Mr Halloran also ran his own lighting retail business for a while but decided cleaning chandeliers would be less stressful.

"You could say my chandelier cleaning is a three-quarter job. I am up at 5.15am to drive the school bus but am working on Saturdays and Sundays to keep up with the chandelier cleaning," he says.

"I just felt that life was too short and I did not want to work in retail seven days a week, Friday nights and Saturdays and Sundays. There is less stress in my life and I am working at my own pace."

While many of the chandeliers are antique, he says a good retail market remains for new chandeliers which can start at \$250 and run to thousands of dollars.

A recent job involved a chandelier which was worth \$11,000 for just one small section.

He established his business, Chandelier-Chiner, after undertaking a New Enterprise Incentive Scheme course.

He said the NEIS course ensured he weighed up the pros and cons of the business, writing a business plan and making contacts with prospective clients such as antique shops to gauge whether it would be viable.

It's a labor intensive job with each individual crystal cleaned by hand.

Some chandeliers weigh up to a tonne. Because Mr Halloran is not a qualified electrician he cannot remove chandeliers from ceilings but uses ladders or scaffolding to remove the crystals from the frame.

He says his biggest job so far has been the recent work at a synagogue. He believes the large brass pendants had not been properly cleaned for around 75 years.



High voltage: John Halloran has found a niche cleaning chandeliers. Picture: JANINE EASTGATE