



Koala Country Contracting Pty Ltd

All drainage work:

- septic tanks
- absorption trenches
- house and yard drainage

All concrete work:

- driveways
- footpaths
- slabs and footings
- retaining walls

All small excavation work

'KOALAFIED TRADESMEN'

A light-hearted look at a serious subject

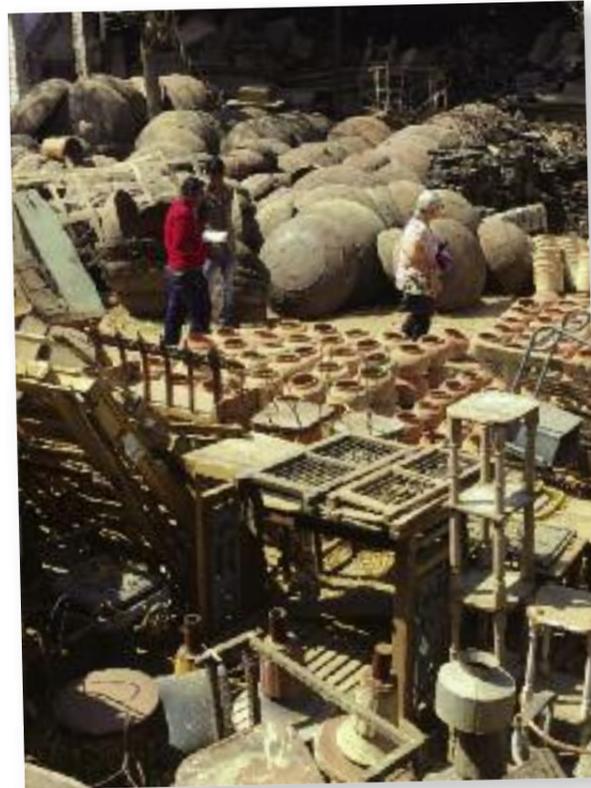
Full liaison and compliance with all council requirements

Contact Bolj: 0410 534 057

SMS your number if I'm out on a job.

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Fiona: We've met some great people on the way, and forged some really good long-term relationships and not just with suppliers. We've got a beautiful tuk-tuk driver in Jaipur who we now have as a friend.

Bec: We always catch up with him when we're there. Even though we don't do a lot of business in Jaipur anymore, we always go there so that we can see him. He was our first contact — the tuk-tuk driver that picked us up from the train station in Jaipur.

He's just stuck by us all the way, and we're always in contact with him even when we're back here in Braidwood. We go around and see his family and all his kids. Sixteen people live in their compound.

We had an amazing experience the last trip over. In Jaipur, we buy these rubies and sapphires, so we do some work with Muslim gem traders.

One of the guys from the gem shop said, "We've got this great contact, I'll give you his card, he's down in Delhi. I'll ring him and tell him that you're coming." Then on the way out he gave Fiona these two enormous turquoise stones.

Fiona: Rocks.

Bec: He said, "Can you give these to Muhammad? They're very valuable. Be careful with them."

We look up this address, and it's in Delhi, at a market that we kind of knew but hadn't been to. We knew nothing about it really, but along with another friend who was travelling with us, the three of us jumped in a tuk-tuk. We gave the driver the card, and he's looking at it going, "Okay."

But when we get to the main gate of this market, we discover it's the largest mosque, not just in India, but maybe in the world outside of Mecca.



(LEFT) A RECLAIM YARD IN JODHPUR; (ABOVE LEFT) SONI AND HER SISTER, ONE OF OUR HANDBAG SUPPLIERS; (ABOVE) RAJAVIA BISHNO AND FRIENDS, RUG AND SOFT FURNISHING SUPPLIERS; (BELOW) MOHAMMED THE ATTAR MAN.

Fiona: In minutes we were transported to another world.

Bec: The tuk tuk driver, who was obviously a Hindi said, "Sorry, I've just got to drop you off here. I don't know where this street is."

Fiona: Like, "Get out".

Bec: We jump out, and we're standing there — fortunately we had the man's telephone number, so we rang him. We're looking around, Fiona's on the phone, and I'm saying, "Tell him we're underneath ...". But there's nothing in English that we could see, no landmark or anything.

Fiona: It was also a Friday, their holy day, and we were the only women, pretty much.

Bec: There were women, but they were fully burkaed.

Fiona: All the men were in their white traditional dress — all the kids were in their white traditional dress. We were like shags on a rock.

Bec: It would've been nice if the gemstone man had told us because we would've dressed appropriately. We're always in long pants and long sleeves and quite often we have a scarf, but we didn't that day, because it was boiling hot.

The man said, "I'll find you. I'll find you." He probably knew that we were there before we'd even rung him I think, through the bush telegraph.

We went through all these little dirt paths, like goat tracks, all through these buildings ...

Fiona: Up and down stairs ...

Bec: ... that were three and four storeys, and up little tracks, over sleeping goats, around another corner, down past a couple of pigs, and then there were all the stalls with their

amazing smells of the attars and the spices and huge bags of saffron.

Fiona: It was amazing couple of hours we spent with him. It was a great experience.

Bec: We would never have ever gone in there without that contact who wanted his gemstones delivered. Then we discussed as to when we do we bring them out? Do we wait ...

Fiona: ... negotiate a price first?

Bec: Obviously, he would know that we had them but anyway, halfway through showing us all his wares, he just put his oils down, and said, "I believe you've got something for me."

Fiona: Time to bring out the gems. "Yep. Sure do." It was great, and we got some beautiful, beautiful attars for the shop, which was really great.

Bec: There was an incredible sense of family there. We were in a shop that was really small but he sat to one side just pulls out piles and piles and piles of ...

Fiona: ... incredible strings of all types of gems.

Bec: We were asking him about where he lived and he said, "Oh, just come through this door." And we went

through the door and it opened up into a huge courtyard, a four story-high compound — all family. So, cousins, the four brothers, their parents, then all the cousins and everyone that's filtered down from that all live there.

Fiona: It's like their own community.

Bec: And there's just kids running in and out.

Fiona: Everyone's got a job. Like, one of them makes the chapatis, the other's grated a vegetable curry, another one does the goat curry and somebody does the cleaning. Everyone's got a job to keep them busy.

Bec: The family, that's a big thing for them, to offer a meal. That's their way of saying "You're in."

We feel good about supporting families. We know who we're buying from and so we know every piece here in Sandalwood and where it's come from.

Fiona: That's right. And it's all an adventure really — and a great way to travel while bringing beautiful things to Braidwood.

For our next venture we're off to Cambodia — but that's another story. ■

