

When renovation leads to devastation

So here's the scenario: you've been thinking about laying some pavers out the back. It's something you can do yourself. What could possibly go wrong?

Well, surprisingly, there actually *is* something that can go very wrong. One small oversight on a seemingly simple job like this can have potentially devastating consequences.

It's a scenario that Trevor Wilcox from Wilcox Building P/L knows only too well. Trevor has been a licensed builder in the Cooroy area for over twenty years now. In that time he's built two child-care centres, many industrial/commercial units and done more renovation jobs than he cares to remember. He's also seen how devastating the smallest of oversights can be. "It's usually just a completely innocent mistake," says Trevor.

So what could go wrong? Well, when a house is originally built there are certain anti-termite measures that have to be adhered to by law. Building inspectors will have checked these and signed off on them. For example, one important rule is that with raised houses (like Queenslanders) there must be a visible gap of at least 75mm between the ground and the building. If you lay your pavers right up to the back door it is very easy to bridge that gap. And that's all the termites need. Now they can build their mud barrier up to your floorboards and walls. Inadvertently you have just given them access to your home.

So the obvious lesson here is: make sure you know what you're doing if you're going to do your own renovations. Otherwise it might be wiser to call in someone like Trevor.

Trevor's best piece of advice when it comes to termites is "prevention is better than cure." He often recommends to his clients that they have a termite baiting system installed. He says that Cooroy Pest Control's SmartGuard Termite Protection plan is "state of the art" in that it is a long-term solution designed to deal with different types of termites.

Local freshness hard to beat

Ian Betts, owner of the popular Peter's Café in Cooroy, is one of those people who finds it difficult to settle for anything sub-standard. In his opinion if you are going to serve coffee and food then it has to be of a consistently high standard. This is the reason his café serves award-winning coffee made by trained baristas and why almost all their meals and tasty treats are made on the premises from the finest, freshest ingredients.

Ian describes Peter's Café as "about as far from a franchise business as it is possible to get!" For example, he goes out of his way to buy local fresh produce as opposed to having it shipped in from elsewhere in the country as so often happens with many franchise businesses. This, he believes, is one of the reasons why the café has managed to maintain its high standards since he bought it eight years ago. During that time he has seen many other local cafés opening and closing and changing owners. In a world where mass-produced, processed food is becoming the norm he feels it is becoming increasingly important to offer authentic, "home-cooked" cuisine made from genuinely fresh produce, sourced locally wherever possible.

"If a local business offers a high quality product or service then we should definitely use them," says Ian. To illustrate this point he describes his dealings with Cooroy Pest Control. After receiving less than satisfactory service from a few outside pest companies he asked Cooroy Pest Control to take over their regular pest maintenance. "Thanks to that company we haven't seen any bugs and pests on our premises for several years now," Ian says, adding that they receive "glowing reports" every time the health inspectors conduct their spot checks. It seems there's no substitute for a job well done and if that job is being done by locals then so much the better.

Peace of mind where the small cattle roam

When Suzanne Baker and Pam Robinson bought their beautiful house on forty acres in Eerwah Vale they weren't entirely sure what they were going to do with all the space. But that's when they discovered miniature cattle or, to be more precise, Miniature White Galloway cattle. These amazing animals (imagine gentle-natured, long-haired cattle about the size of Shetland Ponies) have transformed their lives in so many different ways. Initially they decided to buy just a couple of steers but, six years later, their herd has grown to forty and, what started as a hobby, has clearly grown into a passion.

It turns out there's a big demand for Galloway cattle - in fact they have a waiting list. Not only do they make popular paddock pets but they are also being used in animal-assisted therapy. People find it easy to relax and de-stress around these gentle beasts and they can help restore trust in relationships for people (particularly children) who have suffered abuse. An adoption programme has also been launched which is a great way to encourage compassion towards animals and all the proceeds go to a wonderful cause - the STAMP IT OUT anti-bullying campaign. For more check out www.cuddlecow.com or www.miniaturecattle.com.au

While their cattle are helping others de-stress Pam and Suzanne have had to deal with some stress of their own. Knowing that termites are a fact of life in South East Queensland and having purchased a very valuable property with a house, studio, garage and workshop all made entirely of wood they were understandably worried about how to protect their investment. They have always tried to keep everything as "clean and green" as possible and, with their cattle and dogs around, they weren't too keen on introducing chemicals to deter the termites. Enter Cooroy Pest Control (CPC) with a solution that has ticked all the boxes and given them huge peace of mind. It's called the Exterra Interception and Baiting System and it's environmentally friendly, guaranteed and insured. "Real professionals, always friendly, with a wonderful back up service," is how Pam describes CPC. "They have literally halved our stress levels," adds Suzanne.

The good, the bad and the ugly bugs

Nita Bettridge and her family have been coming to the Noosa area on holiday for over 40 years - so there was never really a question about where she was going to retire. She bought a house in Noosaville and made the move 7 years ago. She loves it! She is close to the river, her friends, the shops – what more could she want? Well, actually there are a couple of things she could do *without!* One of them is the humidity - and the other is the termites.

Back in her hometown of Biloela Nita had already had a bad experience with termites. So in Noosaville she wasn't taking any chances. She had a termite protection system installed and hoped that would give her the peace of mind she needed. It didn't – the main reason being that the company who did the installation never came back to check the traps. Nita tried to do it herself but there were several traps that she couldn't lift. Consequently the bait was never replaced so in effect the whole system was now redundant. The bait has to be replaced so that the termites can take the poison back to the queen. That is how you get rid of the problem.

A few years down the line this shoddy service came back to bite her. While dusting in her laundry the windowsill suddenly gave way. Termites! This time she called Cooroy Pest Control and thankfully it was a different experience. They put down bait traps and then came back to discover the bait was being eaten. They then installed one of the new SmartGuard Termite Protection systems which they come and check on a regular basis. Nita cannot emphasize enough how much happier she is feeling. She was also pleasantly surprised to hear that the price of this system includes Timbersecure insurance for 5 years.

Nita's advice to others is to be on the lookout for any tell-tale signs; to get your house inspected regularly; and, when you need help, make sure you use professional technicians.

Local sticker business owners saved from sticky situation

Luke Bordessa likes to tell the story about the time he had just bought some long pipes in Cooroy and was having a problem fitting them on his roof rack. He had only arrived quite recently from the UK so when a complete stranger approached him he was immediately on his guard. As it turned out the stranger had recognized Luke as a neighbour and asked if he wanted help transporting the pipes back to his house. Luke says he had "never experienced anything like that in the UK" and, seven years down the line, it is still the friendliness of the locals that makes this area so special to him.

Luke and his wife, Kate, bought a house in Pomona and set up a home business called Wallallure. They produce a popular range of removable wall stickers which they sell online and at the Eumundi markets. People like the fact that they are Australian-made and their kids' range has proved especially popular. Kate also does screen-printed tea towels – a personal favourite reads, "Be the person your dog thinks you are!"

Like everyone, they had a pest inspection done when they bought their house. The report gave the "all clear" but warned that they should keep a close eye on things as there was some previous termite damage noticed. Six months later, while checking a damp patch in the carport roof, Luke found termites. He followed the trail and was horrified to discover that they had got into the house and eaten almost a quarter of the roof joists holding up the ceilings! "I was totally freaked out," he says. "We thought it was going to cost us \$50 grand to fix!"

Thankfully, they have now sorted out the problem. Cooroy Pest Control installed one of their SmartGuard Termite Protection systems which has taken care of the termites. Luke says he should have installed one of these bait systems when they received the warning in the report. His advice: "Pay attention – it will save you a lot of money and stress in the long run."

A rising star in Lake Macdonald

When Jennifer Sadler and Peter Lyle suggested a local newsletter six years ago the residents of Lake Macdonald jumped at the idea. The reason is not hard to fathom – information provided by people in a local community is most likely to be relevant (and of interest) to the rest of that community.

And so *The Forest Star* was born. The first issue consisted of only four black and white pages. Jennifer remembers that their start-up budget was \$20 and the cost to print the newsletter was \$19.50! It's come a long way since then. Now, with 12 colour pages packed with interesting content and adverts (that are relevant to the local community), the Forest Star is more like a mini-magazine. It is delivered every month (by volunteers) to 220 houses in Lake Macdonald. The locals love the content and the advertisers swear by the response they get from their ads. It's a not-for-profit venture - the ads only generating enough revenue to cover costs. They are always on the lookout for new content and will even consider expanding the publication further should the need arise.

In keeping with their desire to pass on relevant information to their local community Peter and Jennifer also wanted to make people aware of the termite problem in the area. When they built their house back in 1996 they deliberately used steel frames to avoid the termite problem but white ants still managed to get in, badly damaging a dado rail and cupboard. Peter's advice is to "check your houses thoroughly as 1 in 3 houses are likely to have a termite problem." They have since had a SmartGuard Termite Protection system installed by Cooroy Pest Control which they would definitely recommend to anyone. Termites were recently spotted at the bait so it seems to be doing its job.

“Be vigilant and avoid heartache!” advises local homeowner

According to Elona Bosboom from Cooroy Car Parts moving from Brisbane to Cooroy ten years ago was the best thing they ever did. Elona and her late husband, Ken, previously had a mechanical workshop in Brisbane. Ken was a mechanic and Elona worked in spare parts – talk about a match made in heaven! From the time they first met they started working together so buying a spare parts shop in this beautiful part of the world felt like the right thing to do – and it was! Elona and Ken already had a strong connection with the area - one of their two daughters has lived in Cooroy for the last eighteen years and runs Cooroy Computers. So in 1996 they decided to build a house up on Black Mountain Range Road and then, when the Cooroy Car Parts business came up for sale in 2002, they leapt at the opportunity.

Since then the business has done well and they have managed to expand a lot. One only has to walk into the shop to see the extensive range of parts in stock – not to mention the easy-going, friendly repartee that Elona enjoys with her customers.

Of course the business was affected by the GFC but it was another far more tragic event that would really rock Elona’s world. In 2008 she lost Ken suddenly to a brain tumour. He was only forty nine years old.

Elona says the support she received from the community during this difficult period was “truly amazing”. The way the community rallied around (with food and all manner of assistance) was confirmation to her that they could not have chosen a better place to live and work. With this support and the help of her two loyal staff-members she has managed to soldier on with the business.

And then last year Elona was faced with a challenge of an entirely different nature. The first sign was a tiny piece of mud protruding from a crack in one of the tiles in her shower. This led to a closer inspection of the adjoining room (the laundry) and it was at the back of her linen closet that she started to see some termite damage. However, it wasn’t until the whole wall was opened up that they discovered a massive nest of termites inside. “It was shocking to see how much damage had been done,” says Elona. “I cried!”

Being such a huge nest her major concern was that the whole structure of her house had been compromised. A call to her insurance company provided little comfort. They said they would cover the water damage but not the termite damage!

Elona then contacted Cooroy Pest Control. "They were very professional and helpful – and they could understand my stress!" she says. After assessing the damage inside the house they set about locating the queen's nest. This was discovered in a dead tree not too far from the house. The challenge now was to not only kill all the termites but to make sure they didn't return! The "bait" (termite poison) was placed in the laundry wall, at the site of the queen's nest and in various positions around the perimeter of the property. This not only killed the termites it also meant that any other termites would be attracted to the outside bait sites rather than venturing back to the house. Cooroy Pest Control also come back once a month to check the bait sites which Elona finds reassuring. "At least I feel like I'm protected now," she says.

According to Elona it could have been a lot worse. "The termites could have got into the roof area," she says. "And that could have seriously affected the value of my house." She urges residents in this area to be on their guard and act sooner rather than later. She has been told that this whole area is very prone to termites and the ones that got into her house were a particularly aggressive type. "I would suggest that people in this area get their houses checked out," says Elona. "In the long run it could save them a lot of heartache."

Sounds like wise words from a lady who has already had her fair share of heartache.