



Adam Bish witnessed a huge improvement in his water quality after the purification units were installed and is disappointed to find they will now be removed. INSET: The trial purification unit and tank at the Bish property in Dingee. Pictures: JENNY DENTON

Successful water trial discontinued

Jenny Denton

A PROMISING trial of new technology to provide drinking water at Dingee has been discontinued by the company running it, leaving participants wondering what went wrong.

The trial was established by “profit for purpose” start-up Water Source Australia, which worked with Coliban Water to install nine “point of entry” water purification systems around the town in November 2017.

Adam and Tracy Bish, who run Dingee’s general store, have one of the units.

They said the system, although only connected to their laundry and toilets, was producing water good enough to drink.

“Initially there were quite a few issues,” Mr Bish told the *Loddon Times*.

“A couple of other people had trouble with them, and some turned theirs off.

“But the company were up here all the time and they got ours running well.

“They were monitoring it from Melbourne and knew if there was ever a problem.”

Mr Bish said everything was running smoothly and they were witnessing a big difference in their water quality.

“They were sampling every week and the samples were really good,” Mr Bish said.

However, the monitoring has stopped, and despite improvements in the water quality, the trial will not continue.

Water Source Australia, a small Melbourne-based company owned by charity the Wise Foundation, was set up to develop a commercially viable, remotely-managed small-scale purification units that require no consumable inputs such as chemicals.

Given the high cost of centralised water treatment systems, an affordable unit for

each household or business is seen as a possible solution for very small communities, like Dingee, with a non-potable supply.

The system the company installed at Dingee, was designed in Australia and worked by “combining ozonation with barrier technologies, including ultrafiltration” and was monitored and managed remotely via the internet.

The initiative involved a collaboration with RMIT University and had the backing of the federal government’s Advanced Manufacturing Growth Centre.

Its concept was proven in a trial with Grampians Mallee Water at Horsham.

The Dingee trial, to test a prototype unit, took the project to the next stage.

Water data collected over the trial’s 12-month period, which commenced in April 2018, was to be submitted to the independent, not-for-profit industry group, Water Research Australia, for assessment.

However, that never happened because after an issue that pushed back the trial’s completion date, in February the project stalled.

The Bish household spends around \$1000 a year trucking tank water in.

They were hopeful they would be able to start drinking the output from their unit once the testing was complete.

However, the trial was never completed.

The couple weren’t informed by either Water Source or Coliban Water that the trial had ended.

They missed a recent Coliban Water meeting where the issue was discussed and only found out from another resident that the units would be removed.

“A customer came in the other day and told us they’re taking them away,” Mr Bish said.

“That’s the first we’ve heard of it.”

Dingee trial abandoned

Jenny Denton

ACCORDING to Water Source Australia’s acting CEO, Mark Campbell, the company’s water purification system trial at Dingee “proved extremely successful”.

“The data that’s come out of that trial in terms of water quality was fantastic,” Mr Campbell said.

“What we’ve learnt has allowed us to reconfigure the units.

“The technology we originally developed was rudimentary and over-complicated.

“We’re now using significantly different technology.”

Mr Campbell was part of a changing of the guard at the company, which saw the original version of the purification system dropped.

He said a company in Cambridge in the United Kingdom was working on a new design that utilised UV rather than ozone treatment.

Mr Campbell said Water Source was planning a new trial of the second-generation systems in April next year, which would be done largely in the UK, with the company also hoping to test one or more of the 20 units at the Dingee dam.

He said the company continued to work

with Coliban Water but no longer had any commercial relationship with the water authority.

Water Source expected to be able to start manufacturing its new systems in December next year.

Meanwhile, Coliban Water’s executive general manager of water quality, David Sheehan, said the Dingee trial had been “suspended” because “Water Source Australia identified some issues with the units”.

“The purpose of the trial was to determine whether ‘clean’ water could be produced by the units that would meet the requirements of the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines, with respect to the production of safe drinking water, in a cost-effective manner,” Mr Sheehan said.

“The data from the trial was planned to be analysed and reviewed independently, but this assessment has not been undertaken due to the trial being suspended and the units yet to be proven.

“We are working with Water Source Australia to determine the timing for the removal of these units and will speak with the customers involved in the trial further regarding the conclusion of the trial.”



Inglewood Senior Constable Troy Young and Western Region Inspector Donna Mitchell will be working together on a new initiative which utilises a collaborative approach to addressing community safety. Picture supplied.

Community web of protection

Jenny Denton

POLICE will be reaching out to community members throughout the Loddon shire in coming months as part of a plan to engage them in a collaborative approach to community safety.

Goldfields Police Service Area Local Area Commander, Inspector Donna Mitchell, said a new “community web of protection” strategy was about “denying, disrupting and preventing crime and criminal intent”.

“We will be talking to the community to find out what the community wants in order to feel safer,” Insp Mitchell said.

“It’s about listening to what the community wants and building partnerships with them to help make that happen.

“We will also be looking at future challenges to increasing community safety.”

The new initiative has already been introduced in the Macedon Ranges, where changes have been implemented to increase police visibility.

While it wasn’t possible to satisfy community requests for greater police numbers, Inspector Mitchell said changes to rostering and patrols have put more officers on the street in busy locations.

The next area to be tackled covers the Loddon shire, from Tarnagulla through to Boort.

Inspector Mitchell said each police station in the area would start working on an action plan which documents what they are doing and highlights any enhancements that could be made in terms of community safety.

“It’s about increasing the community’s sense of safety,” she said.

While small stations already have close links with the community, Insp Mitchell said there might be opportunities to increase engagement, via the use of media and social media channels.

“Over the next six months we’ll be out and about talking to people and getting our action plans organised.”

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