

Central Victorian Livestock Exchange
Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Produced for RLX Operating Co Pty Ltd

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Kismet Forward is a Geelong-based consultancy providing specialist advice and support in the areas of community engagement, facilitation, conflict management coaching, program logic, strategy, evaluation, training and project management.

Further information can be found at www.kismetforward.com.au

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1. Introduction and Background

After nine years of planning and construction, the Central Victorian Livestock Exchange (CVLX) in Miners Rest opened to cattle and sheep sales in October 2018. Dubbed a ‘five-star sale yard’ by the Ballarat Times¹, the facility replaced the 1860s Latrobe Street yards previously operated by City of Ballarat.

Not all community members welcomed the prospect of a livestock exchange in their area, with 180 submissions received during the public exhibition of the Planning Permit and Works Approval applications. A coordinated community campaign against the facility followed through to continued opposition by some community members after the opening. This has been exacerbated by reports of odour events in the months since, and the issuing of two Pollution Abatement Notices by EPA Victoria.

CVLX wishes to improve relationships with people affected by the facility to enable constructive discussion around issues and their amelioration.

1.1 Purpose of this Plan

Kismet Forward has been engaged to produce this Plan to guide CVLX’s ongoing communication and engagement activities with the community in order to improve local relationships and acceptance of CVLX into the future.

¹ <https://timesnewsgroup.com.au/ballarat/news/central-victorian-livestock-exchange-officially-opens/> (25/10/18)

² <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/social-license-slo.asp>

2. Engagement Parameters

2.1 Social license

Social license refers to the *ongoing acceptance of a company or industry's standard business practices and operating procedures by its employees, stakeholders and the general public*².

‘Stakeholders’ are individuals or organisations that affect or can be affected by CVLX. In this context the term refers to neighbours/affected community members, EPA Victoria and City of Ballarat.

Social license is created and maintained slowly over time as the actions of a company build trust with the community it operates in and other stakeholders. A company must be seen to be operating responsibly, taking care of its employees and the environment, and being a good “corporate citizen”. When problems do occur, the company must act quickly to resolve the issues or the social license to operate is put in danger³.

The phases of building social license are summarised below⁴.

³ *ibid*

⁴ On Common Ground Consultants Inc, sourced from <https://sociallicense.com/definition.html>



sentiment is exacerbated (amongst some) by a lack of trust that CVLX will engage genuinely with the community. For some, this means that CVLX has not yet achieved legitimacy (ref diagram).

In addition to the OMP, there is a suite of operational procedures that CVLX is putting (or has put) in place to help build legitimacy, including those relating to sustainability, biosecurity, animal welfare, the community grants program and workplace health and safety.⁶

In order to build social license, companies must *first do the right thing and then be seen doing the right thing*⁷. This means evaluating and re-evaluating operational and management systems to ensure that they are meeting contemporary standards and expectations.

In practice, the initial basis for social legitimacy comes from *authentic* engagement with all members of the community and providing information on the project, the company and what may happen in the future and then answering any and all questions⁵.

The biggest risk to the building of social licence for CVLX is the concern of some community members and EPA Victoria that CVLX is not operating within the odour parameters that it promised during the Works Approval and Planning Permit application processes.

While CVLX's Odour Management Plan (OMP) seeks to address these issues, there is in some quarters a lack of confidence that CVLX has the ability to control offsite odour, and that the OMP does not include any new measures to combat existing problems. This

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Some of these procedures are listed at <https://rlx.com.au/about-us/>

⁷ <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/social-license-slo.asp>

2.2 Goal and Engagement Objectives

The goal for this early operational stage of CVLX is to *build social license to operate its Miners Rest facility*.

The following measurable short-medium term objectives for engagement will assist the achievement of this goal:

1. To meet reasonable community expectations regarding the manner in which CVLX provides information and responds to community concerns (ongoing);
2. To build community understanding of CVLX, its commitment to social and environmental responsibility and its importance to the local economy (ongoing); and
3. To build positive relationships with local community members that are based on open, direct, authentic and timely communication (ongoing).

2.3 Engagement Principles

The following principles apply to all forms of engagement undertaken by CVLX. These principles are underpinned by the RLX Values (see Attachment 2).

CVLX treats all community members with respect

- People who are adversely impacted by the operations of CVLX are engaged proactively and personally with the aim of resolving issues to the satisfaction of all parties.
- All interactions with community members are respectful and characterised by active listening, with the aim of understanding concerns. Issues are non-defensively acknowledged and the circumstances surrounding them are fully and transparently explained. A timeframe for response to the issues is given and adhered to.

CVLX is responsive, accessible and accountable

- Two CVLX staff members act as liaison points for interactions with the community: the Site Manager and the EHS Advisor.
- Odour reports will be managed in accordance with the agreed procedures within the Odour Management Plan.
- All correspondence and messages from community members are acknowledged as soon as they are received, and again (in writing) when the matter has been addressed, detailing what was done and how community feedback was used.
- CVLX honours all commitments made. When changes in circumstance lead to a promise or timeframe not being able to be fulfilled, the community member is contacted with a full explanation.

- CVLX draws upon local insights, values and knowledge to inform its engagement approach and response to issues.

CVLX is clear, honest and transparent in its communication

- Communication materials are written to build understanding rather than brand reputation. They contain simple and clear messages and are written in plain English.
- Information of relevance to community members is easily accessed.
- CVLX will monitor its activities to ensure its engagement is working and adjust its approach where needed.

2.4 Negotiables and Non-negotiables

The known negotiable and non-negotiable elements of the engagement process (at the time of plan preparation) are shown below. These elements describe what community members and other stakeholders can – and can't – influence and will assist in ensuring that expectations are managed. This list will be further clarified and developed over time.

Negotiables

- Operational odour controls e.g. timing and extent of cleaning
- Engagement approaches and how community needs regarding engagement are best met
- Input into allocation of grant funding⁸.

Non-negotiables

- Stock numbers held on site
- Sale dates
- No rewording of CVLX contributed communication into community publications (unless final copy is approved by CVLX)
- Compliance with the Environment Improvement Plan, relevant regulations and legislation

⁸ More information on the grants scheme can be found at :

<https://rlx.com.au/media/38057/fy20-community-grants-application-form.pdf>

3. The Engagement Approach

3.1 Engagement Plan Summary

The following plan is based on the engagement model developed by the International Association of Public Participation and adapted by the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (See Attachment 1).

Level of engagement	INFORM & EDUCATE	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE
CVLX's commitment to community and stakeholders	We will keep you informed and build your understanding about our operations.	We will keep you informed and will listen to and acknowledge your concerns.	We will work with you to exchange information, ideas and concerns.	We will engage with you on matters of common concern, working with you to develop alternatives and solutions.
Relevant groups	General community and media	Miners Rest community and community advocates (including the Committee for Miners Rest)	Neighbouring landowners and those affected by CVLX operations	EPA Victoria City of Ballarat
Engagement Tools and Methods (Refer to next section for detail)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A 'community' page on the RLX website 2. Fact Sheets 3. An FAQ 4. 6-monthly newsletter 5. Social media 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Tools 1-5 PLUS 6. An annual Community Open Day 7. Updates in local media 8. Onsite and offsite informal meetings, site tours and updates 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Tools 1-8 PLUS 9. One-on-one and small group meetings 10. CVLX Neighbours Reference Group 11. Issues log 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Tools 1-11 (as relevant and appropriate) 12. Formal and informal meetings and correspondence

The fifth level of engagement is 'Empower.' Due to the overall objectives, this level of engagement will not be used. It should also be noted that 'Inform' has been expanded to 'Inform & Educate.' The rationale is that all written materials need to assist in building the capacity of the community and stakeholders to understand CVLX and what it is doing to protect social and environmental values.

3.2 Engagement Tools and Methods in Detail

3.2.1 'Inform and Educate' Tools and Methods

The tools and methods listed under the 'Inform and Educate' column of the Engagement Plan Summary are general communications tools that seek to keep general community members and other stakeholders informed (and assist their understanding) about CVLX and its operations.

Each of these tools will be written/produced with the target audience (general community) in mind (i.e. they will be quite separate to materials developed for stock agents or buyers).

These include

1. Creation of a '*community*' page on the RLX website that is a repository for information of community interest, including Fact Sheets, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), community updates and announcements (e.g. advertising the opening of applications for the grants scheme, promoting the hotline), newsletter, odour monitoring data etc.
2. Production of *Fact Sheets* regarding CVLX approaches/procedures to social and environmental matters e.g. odour management, animal welfare, protecting the local environment etc.
3. Production of a *Frequently Asked Questions* document that addresses common questions, particularly regarding issues and operations and is updated regularly. *Updated on an ongoing basis.*

4. Production of a 6-monthly *newsletter* that provides updates about CVLX news and initiatives e.g. facility upgrades, community grants etc *Next issue by October 2019, then twice yearly.*
5. Social media. *Ongoing.*

3.2.2 'Consult' Tools and Methods

The tools and methods listed under the 'Consult' column of the Engagement Plan Summary are targeted at dialogue with members of the local community, and advocates (including Councillors) who act on their behalf (or in the community interest). These stakeholders want to ensure that community members are not impacted by CVLX operations.

Engagement tools and methods for this stakeholder group include those previously described, plus

6. *A Community Open Day* that enables local community members to view the site and ask questions about operations etc.
7. *Updates in local media* about site operations, progress and successes in remediating issues. Subject to agreement, the content could be included in, or released with, the newsletter of the Committee for Miners Rest. *Ongoing.*
8. *Onsite and offsite informal meetings, site tours and updates* will be held on an as-needs basis: both in response to complaints and questions, and to proactively discuss successes, initiatives and issues. *Ongoing.*

3.2.3 'Involve' Tools and Methods

The tools and methods listed under the 'Involve' column of the Engagement Plan Summary are targeted at working with neighbours who are (or have been) directly affected by CVLX operations. These stakeholders want to ensure that they are not impacted by CVLX, and that they are listened to when issues do arise - and that such issues are quickly resolved.

Engagement tools and methods for this stakeholder group include those previously described, plus

9. *One-on-one and small group meetings* to discuss issues that affect neighbours directly and potential solutions to these issues. This includes invitations to view odour sources and discuss solution options, as well as proactive measures to discuss successes, initiatives and issues. *Timing as required*⁹.
10. *CVLX Neighbours Reference Group*, which is a quarterly invitation-only forum of affected neighbours and community groups including Committee for Miners Rest, Miners Rest Primary School, CFA, Landcare and Lions as well as local businesses. The purpose of the Reference Group is to discuss CVLX performance, progress and initiatives and to work together to find solutions to neighbour concerns. It replaces the previous Community Liaison Committee. EPA Victoria and City of Ballarat officers are invited to this forum. *Timing as required*.
11. An *Issues Log* of community complaints will be maintained by CVLX, detailing the date/time and nature of the concern, when the initial

response was made and when the follow-up response (detailing any action) occurred. *Already in place, continually updated*.

3.2.4 'Collaborate' Tools and Methods

The tools and methods listed under the 'Collaborate' column of the Engagement Plan Summary are aimed at officers within EPA Victoria and City of Ballarat. These stakeholders have an interest in CVLX operating in a compliant manner.

Engagement tools and methods for this stakeholder group include those previously described, plus

12. *Formal and informal meetings and correspondence* with EPA and City of Ballarat officers to work through community concerns. *Ongoing, as needed*.

⁹ These meetings might take place with the Reference Group.

3.3 Key messages

Project communications and collateral will include the following key messages, as appropriate:

- CVLX wants to be a good neighbour and cares about impacts on the local community. CVLX staff and management are doing everything possible to minimise these impacts on the local community.
- Please contact CVLX directly as soon as you experience an issue - via feedback@cvlx.com.au or the complaints hotline 1300 373 842. This is the best way to ensure that the matter is addressed quickly. Complaints will be passed onto the EPA upon request, or reports can be made directly to the EPA as well as CVLX.
- CVLX brings business and employment into the local economy, and CVLX management and staff look forward to the facility being regarded as an asset to the community.

4. Engagement Risks and Risk Management






Engagement Risk	Likelihood of risk occurring (L/M/H)	Consequence of risk occurring (L/M/H)	Engagement Strategy for managing risk/ issue
Community outrage	M-H	M-H	<p>Authentic engagement and listening to community concerns; implement Engagement Plan and provide opportunities to discuss concerns at times that suit community members</p> <p>Actively listen to comments provided by all stakeholders</p> <p>Clearly articulate what can be done, and why the 'givens' are not negotiable</p> <p>Use appropriate language to help build relationships and be accountable</p> <p>Clearly state how feedback will be used and when CVLX will respond</p>
Disingenuous engagement approach (e.g. CVLX not taking community concerns seriously)	M-H	H	Commitment to effective, respectful and clear communication and timely response
Community cynical that engagement is a public relations exercise only	H	M	<p>Be accountable for commitments made and provide timely responses</p> <p>Ensure that communication materials (as opposed to promotional materials) are not written in 'spin'</p>
Negative or inaccurate media exposure	M	M	<p>Proactively inform the media (e.g. briefings, press releases) of successes and initiatives</p> <p>Ensure accurate information is available to the media and community through a range of avenues e.g. social media, newsletters, fact sheets etc</p>
Community concerns ignored or disregarded	L-M	H	Continually refer to and manage the issues log, ensuring input has been respectfully considered and that feedback has been provided to individuals

Attachment 1: Levels of Community Engagement

The following diagram is an adaptation of the International Association for Public Participation's *Public Participation Spectrum*, as depicted in the Victorian Auditor-General's Office *Public Participation in Government Decision Making: A Better Practice Guide*.

It describes the various levels of community engagement, including the objective of each and what the organisation must commit to when deploying each.

This model has been developed for use by government agencies, however its content is equally relevant to engagement undertaken by CVLX.

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
LEVELS					
OBJECTIVE	To provide balanced and objective information to support understanding by the public.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work with the public to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.	To engage with the public on each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and a preferred solution.	To create governance structures to delegate decision-making and/or work directly with the public.
COMMITMENT	To keep the public informed.	To listen to and acknowledge the public's concerns.	To work with the public to exchange information, ideas and concerns.	To seek advice and innovations from and amongst various public parties.	To work with the public to implement agreed-upon decisions.
DESCRIPTION	<p>Participation</p> <p>The first two public participation levels—Inform and Consult—typically occur when a decision has already been made, and government wants to either communicate that decision to the public, or seek opinions on the decision.</p>		<p>Engagement</p> <p>The third and fourth public participation levels—Involve and Collaborate—have two way information flows, and include sharing information within and across stakeholder communities during the decision-making process.</p> <p>When undertaking Engagement, decision makers commit to using stakeholder feedback to inform the decision and shape the outcome.</p> <p>Activity that occurs at the Collaboration level is also sometimes referred to as partnering.</p>		<p>Empowerment</p> <p>The fifth public participation level—Empower—is also often referred to as co production, where decisions are made jointly between government and the community.</p> <p>This is typically when decision-making authority has been delegated to a group including members from both the government and the community/industry.</p>

Attachment 2: RLX Values

1. SAFETY

We ensure Safety is paramount at all RLX facilities through development and infrastructure, prioritising safety in all operations.

2. COMPETITIVENESS

We remain Competitive in a large industry through a combination of business principles and extensive agricultural knowledge.

3. INTEGRITY

We act with Integrity to maintain honesty and fairness in all dealings with our investors and our industry.

4. ETHICS

We uphold Ethics within all RLX operations via dedicated business policies that are aligned with moral principles, safeguarding livestock, staff, customers and community.

5. INNOVATION

We apply Innovation in design, device and method whilst accessing and implementing ground-breaking, industry leading technology.

6. SUSTAINABILITY

We underpin Sustainability through the combination of world leading management procedures and ecological inputs as a custodian to the environment.