



Session Report

Neutrog Community Reference Panel

10th November 2025



Background

Neutrog, with the support of local independent facilitation company DemocracyCo have set up the Neutrog Community Reference Panel (the Panel) to provide ongoing feedback on how Neutrog can meet the expectations of residents and businesses in the community.

The Panel will help Neutrog to continue to provide economic opportunities in the Hills, while minimising odour, dust and fire risk.

About the Panel

The Panel is made up of a diverse mix of approximately 10 community members including residents, community group representatives, staff, suppliers, and representatives from local government. Importantly, the panel members all have different lived experiences of Neutrog and their operations, and therefore will be vital to ensure accurate, balanced and agreed-upon feedback can be reflected to Neutrog. Initially the panel will be focused on providing specific feedback to Neutrog on the areas of fire and air quality, with the intention to form meaningful actions for Neutrog. Once these sessions are complete, we hope Panel members will continue to meet over the next two years to provide ongoing feedback, creating an important mechanism for transparency and sustained communication between the community and Neutrog.

The Panel is being facilitated by DemocracyCo using deliberative and co-design engagement methods which ensure constructive, respectful, and productive conversations.

About this Report

After every meeting of the Panel a report from that session will be produced – this is that Report. This report seeks to provide a summary overview of the

- The process the Panel went through in this session,
- what was discussed by the Panel,
- speakers and what they talked about.

Session 2

10th November 2025

Overview of Process

The second session of the Panel was focused on the issue of fire with the goal for the Panel to be writing up their advice to Neutrog on 'what would give them confidence that Neutrog was doing everything they can to prevent fire risk.

As this panel session did not have a quorum, the Panel did not undertake any consensus work (as per their terms of reference), but spent time drafting their advice for Neutrog together – **for the whole Panel to consider at a future meeting.**

Our Speakers

At the beginning of Session 2, the Panel was joined by Megan Golding and Tracy Neldner – both from the EPA, who briefed the panel on the EPA's role and function. Hazel Ashby from Neutrog then spoke to the Panel very briefly and outlined in more detail how the Panel's work is being used by Neutrog.

Discussion Themes

The Panel's conversation was focused on fire during this session.

Building on the work the Panel had done on 3 November, in highlighting their hopes and worries in relation to fire, the Panel members present worked to document their objectives and potential actions.

They drafted three sets of objectives around:

- Fire prevention, control and preparedness.
- Transparency, honesty and openness
- Community safety and coexistence.

The detail below is in draft form – until the entire Panel has a chance to consider, review and reach consensus around it.

Fire prevention, control and emergency preparedness

Panel Objectives

- Put community mind at ease and to reassure the community - ensure the highest standards/processes in place for any emergency situation
- Prevent and stop fires.
- Achieve CFS approval & assurance.
- To have systems and resources in place within Neutrog to increase community safety.
- To be ahead on any possibility of an emergency
- To address risks at the site

What problems / issues we need to solve

- Reassurance that Neutrog are prepared.
- Concern over uncontrolled fire caused by spontaneous combustion, explosion of machinery.
- Deployment of fire resources – ensuring that CFS resources are available to be deployed across the community and not caught up at a preventable Neutrog fire.
- 24hr monitoring effectiveness.

We would know these outcomes were being met if we could see:

- No fires
- Reduction in the number of fires
- Visible monitoring
- Frequent reporting on emergency drills and preparedness
- CFS approved fire management plan.
- Community directly informed about Neutrogs preparedness.

Our ideas for Action

Who	Potential Actions
What should Neutrog do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore installation of a town siren for emergencies • Constantly improve - constant fire drills etc. (frequency maintained) • Communicate what they're doing ahead of high-risk weather. • Share site plans, equipment / water points etc. • Gypsum stockpile for fire management - with separate equipment • Heat sensor drones. • CFS approved equipment & people trained in its use. • Ensure all equipment is maintained & up to date. • Improved management of heat in piles • Publish Neutrogs fire management plan / CFS review. • Manage the fire risk on site per activity and have the capability to fight fires internally. • independent 24-hour monitoring - thermal / AI / Camera
What should Local Government do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep an eye on Neutrog - making sure they're doing the right thing
What should the EPA do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforce the rules. • Offer more support with similar things that have worked well elsewhere
What should the community do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay vigilant. • Manage their own fire loads. • Be willing to be more informed about the processes on site. • Stay engaged with CFS/EPA/Neutrog

Are there any others who should be part of actions on this objective? If so, who are they, and what should they be doing?

- CFS to suggest & approve all fire-fighting equipment & directly inform the community

Transparency, honesty and openness

Panel Objective

Remove or minimize the perception of dishonesty or failing to disclose the reality of situations, resolve past experiences with a new 'way' so people feel included and build trust.

What problems / issues we need to solve

- lack of transparency
- dishonesty regarding reported issues
- perception
- 24-hour monitoring not effective
- close proximity increasing risk.

We would know these outcomes were being met if we could see:

- tangible communication channels, i.e. mail sent, social media posts, etc.
- public engagement from Neutrog includes efforts from top (Board and CE) to bottom.
- do a periodic survey from locals and community on how Neutrog is tracking.
- decrease in complaints to the EPA over time.

Our ideas for Action

Who	Action Ideas
What should Neutrog do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular communication that's accessible to all with regular updates. • Be so open and honest that the community can finally start to build trust.
What should Local Government do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local government could help promote awareness or share information with the community.
What should the EPA do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More hands-on approach with the community
What should the community do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen and be more involved and engaged.

Are there any others who should be part of actions on this objective? If so, who are they, and what should they be doing?

- Potentially other businesses like Hillgrove who have been doing community engagement for years - working together with Neutrog and learning from one another

Community safety and coexistence

Fire can be deadly. Coexistence can't occur without regard to community safety.

Panel Objective

- That the community trusts Neutrog not to endanger their safety in the event of a fire.
- Demonstrate being a good corporate citizen, behave as a member of the community.
- People over profit - Be kind people that care not only about their employees but locals as well, a community centred company.
- To improve confidence and trust that Neutrog is committed to coexisting with the community.

What problems / issues we need to solve

- Distrust
- Perceptions / not caring / not being careful in processes.
- Misinformation

We would know these outcomes were being met if we could see:

- Less disgruntled people on social media
- This is very hard to measure!

Our ideas for Action

Who	Potential Actions
What should Neutrog do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More knowledge shared about actions. • Embed themselves in community activities and organisations. • Giving more than taking • Donating trees to Landcare groups • Consistent communication of continuous improvement activities and updates on the overall business, with a focus on the milestones, improvements and non-compliance
What should Local Government do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on activities being undertaken between LGA and Neutrog
What should the EPA do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backing Neutrog more • Share more information about the positive as well as the negative

<p>What should the community do?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be open to engaging with Neutrog. • Be inquisitive.
<p>Are there any others who should be part of actions on this objective? If so, who are they, and what should they be doing?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CFS to advise Neutrog on equipment and processes to ensure safety - and update the community directly.

Decisions

There were no decisions taken by the Panel due to there not being a quorum present. Consensus work around the Panels objectives and actions with regards to Fire will be done at a future meeting.

Next Steps

The Panel still have some work to do on their objectives regarding Fire. This will occur at an upcoming session.

More Information

To find out more information visit

- DemocracyCo project website - <https://www.democracyco.com.au/whats-on/neutrog-community-reference-panel/>
- Neutrog’s Community Portal - <https://neutrogcommunityportal.com.au/>



