Introducing New Zealand's Plain Language Act 2022

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What is the Act's purpose?

The primary purpose of the Plain Language Act 2022 ('the Act') is **'to improve the effectiveness and accountability'** of the public service through the consistent use of 'plain language'.

The Act also aims 'to improve the accessibility' of information, including for 'people with disabilities' (such as poor eyesight).

What does the Act require?

The Act requires 69 'reporting agencies' (including every public service department and Crown agent) to 'take reasonable steps to ensure that all relevant documents … use plain language.'

The Act defines 'relevant documents' as those intended for 'the public generally'.

How does the Act define 'plain language'?

Plain Language is typically defined as language that is 'precise and familiar' to the intended audience. The Act defines plain language as 'language that is (a) appropriate to the intended audience; and (b) clear, concise, and well organised', which is really a definition of 'clear information'.

Because **every piece of business writing should be 'clear information'**, the Act's definition can be viewed as a professional standard for the public service that should apply to all written outputs.

Why does the Act matter?

The Act matters because **clear information is integral to the cost-effective provision of any service**. Information that is unclear, overly long, or poorly-organised creates unnecessary cost, confusion, and distraction.

The Nakedize Plain Language Assessment Tool

This checklist tool will help you to quickly assess if information you have written or received meets the requirements (and spirit) of the Act.

Instructions: Start from the top and if the answer is no, then you have identified a fundamental shortcoming and you can stop your assessment (the information is not written in plain language).

Quality	Plain language assessment question	✓
Value	Does the information provide value to an explicit (or clearly-implied) audience?	☐
Brevity	Is the information **concise** enough to be read by the intended audience?	☐
Logic	Is the information **organised** well enough to be understood by the intended audience?	☐
Clarity	Is the purpose and meaning of the information **clear** to the intended audience?	☐

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More information

Visit nakedize.com/plain-language-act-2022 to learn more about the Act and Nakedize's plain language training services. Or reach out to Simon at simon@nakedize.com, or through LinkedIn.