



Professional Development Workshop

Speketh so Pleyne: Plain English for Editors

**Presented by Dr Neil James
Executive Director, Plain English Foundation**

Wednesday, 7 September 2011, 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

Venue: Dockside Conference Centre, Sydney

Cost: \$250 for Society members, \$295 for non-members

(includes lunch, and morning and afternoon tea)

To book a place, register online at www.editorsnsw.com/conference2011.htm

Many writers and organisations give lip service to writing in plain language, yet still produce hard-to-fathom documents. Others argue plain English does not apply to their work. So what exactly is plain English, and where is it relevant for editors to apply it?

Although plain language has grown considerably in method and influence in the last 50 years, its core concepts are very old. Neil will illustrate 15 core principles as they emerged historically over 2,000 years:

1. Write for your audience
2. Match the text to the content
3. Use the simplest words possible
4. Cut the clutter
5. Prefer the active voice
6. Avoid jargon and cliché
7. Write in short sentences on average
8. Punctuate for clarity
9. Match the readability to your audience
10. Have a clear core message
11. Structure to foreground key information
12. Maximise coherence
13. Use document design
14. Measure the outcomes
15. Test with your audience

This workshop will interweave practical exercises with historical illustrations of how great writers supported the case for a plain style in literary as well as in everyday documents. It will place the recent moves to legislate for plain language into their historical context, and explore the challenges and opportunities these present for editors.

About the presenter:

Dr Neil James is executive director of the Plain English Foundation, which combines plain English training, editing and evaluation with a campaign for a more ethical public language. His latest book, Writing at Work, critiques how public language is used and abused, and suggests how it can be radically improved. Neil is also the editor of Writers on Writing and The Complete Sentimental Bloke. He has also published over 60 articles and essays on language and literature in publications as diverse as the Times Literary Supplement and the Daily Telegraph. Neil speaks regularly about public language in the media, where he features on the ABC local radio network.