

# A J Park client care charter makes plain English finals

By Darise Ogden

WHILE SOME law firms have struggled to come to grips with the new client care rules introduced by the *Lawyers and Conveyancers Act 2006*, A J Park has embraced the client care ethos and developed a client care charter (charter) that communicates clearly and in plain English. In addition to ensuring clients' needs are met, the charter itself has received recognition by making the finals in the "Best Plain English Document – Private Sector Award" in this year's WriteMark New Zealand Plain English Awards (WriteMark Awards), which were held in Wellington on 11 September.

The WriteMark Awards, judged by an independent panel of experts, attracted a record number of entries from all over New Zealand. A J Park was the only law firm to make the finals.

A J Park's charter was described by the judges as a "significant long-life document". "It shows leadership for the profession in providing [an] equal exchange of information," they said. "It reflects the spirit of the legislation by communicating with openness and honesty and answering anticipated questions."

A J Park partner Corinne Blumsky said the firm was especially proud to make the finals, and to have their charter recognised as a leading example for the profession. "Our client charter is likely to be the first written document a new client receives from A J Park and sets the tone for our future relationship," said Blumsky.

Like many firms, A J Park did not want to alienate its clients by starting with a technical legal document, which is why the partners chose to draft the client care charter in plain English. "The charter sets out who we are, what our clients can expect from us, and what clients can do to get the best from our relationship," said Blumsky. "The charter has to contain mundane business details, but by focusing on the needs of our clients, we have made it an easy-



to-read, relationship-building document."

The firm's commitment to using plain English for the benefit of its clients was first rewarded in the 2006 WriteMark Awards, when it won the "Plain English Champion – Best Organisation" award. Blumsky said having their charter recognised for another award is further confirmation of their commitment to clear, concise communication, and to their commitment to improving business writing in New Zealand.

