



What's the story?

Online Encyclopedia of New Zealand

Media Release

12 September 2008

Kiwi Encyclopedia Wins Top Award for Plain English

A determination to speak clearly to its audiences has won [Te Ara, The Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#), the top award for Best Plain English Website (public sector).

The award from WriteMark New Zealand recognises official writing that avoids 'gobbledygook' and is easy to read, understand, and act upon after just one reading.

Judges commented that the Te Ara website, produced by the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, has an engaging style with good use of headings, layouts and sidebars.

"The website is very well structured in layers to draw the reader from general information into more technical detail. It shows sophistication in writing as well as wide appeal across many types of readers and groups of New Zealanders."

Te Ara, a long-term project which began publishing in 2005, is the first national encyclopedia to be built for the web. So far three of nine thematic groups have been published and 11 of 22 New Zealand regions.

The Production Manager, Ross Sommerville, says even though some of the topics are highly technical and specialised the small team of editors is committed to avoiding jargon and complex vocabulary.

"In the early days voices were sometimes raised and teeth gnashed as writers feared their high concepts would be 'dumbed down' and their finely honed metaphors blunted. Editors are usually the unsung heroes and heroines of publishing. This award celebrates their efforts," he says.

Another Ministry for Culture and Heritage website, [NZLive.com](#), a cultural portal and events guide, received an honourable mention in the same category. The judges commented it establishes a very good framework for what will increasingly become an excellent public resource.

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