Lawyers tend to test legal tools, books and training against the standard “useful”.

This is a “useful” book.

It is however so directly focused on university students that it is unlikely to be “useful” to practitioners.

The content is good. The writing used is in itself “effective”.

Many of the issues addressed are lessons in writing that apply to practitioners but the book is so focussed on the university student that experienced practitioners seeking to improve their writing skills are better off to look elsewhere.

The useful discussion on plain English writing and the law refers to the moral imperative and pragmatic necessity for clear legal writing and communication. As Justice Kirby has said, speaking with a clear voice to people bound by the law is central to the aspiration of democratic governance. Law users and law practitioners using plain English reduces the cost and risk of the administration and business of the law. Better communication means less confusion, more correction of misunderstandings, less negligence claims and happier clients.

The golden rules for plain writing are worth repeating:

- Consider your reader, the context of and purpose for your writing.
- Keep the style “as simple as possible – but no simpler”.
- Use specialist terms only when there is no plain English alternative.
- Use short sentences where possible.
- Use sentences in the active voice.
- Comply with the rules of grammar and punctuation.
- Use gender neutral and non discriminatory language.
- Think carefully about layout and presentation.