

Rees urges public service:

Premier to end confusion

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NSW public servants will be put under a plain-English microscope to make sure the documents they produce are clear and precise.

Premier Nathan Rees has ordered an audit of public service language after admitting he has been stumped by some of the confusing and cumbersome wording in government documents.

Mr Rees told the Plain English Foundation's Raising the Standards conference in Sydney that clear English was vital for good government.

"I'll be issuing a memorandum to the entire NSW public sector stressing the importance of plain English, particularly in publications and documents intended for public use," he said.

"I want that memorandum to set the tone and establish the benchmarks for agencies in promoting the use of plain English.

"I want plain English to become an essential part of how the public



Straightforward approach ... the Premier announces his plain-English plan yesterday at the conference.

sector does business. I want to see training in plain English stepped up across the public sector over the next two years."

Starting next year, the Premier's annual public service awards would include a special category

for the best use of plain English. "We need rigorous tests for readability applied to all government documents for public consumption," Mr Rees said. "I will therefore be directing the Department of Premier and Cabinet to arrange for

random checks by focus groups of selected documents from every public sector agency.

"The focus groups will assess the documents for readability, clarity, and ease of comprehension.

"It will be a plain English audit of

the entire Government sector. And agencies that don't meet the high standards I require will be targeted for remedial training."

Mr Rees made his point by citing this sentence from a NSW Government document: "Development

