

Tuesday, October 6, 2015

Author launches her new book

A new collection of short stories by Central Hawke's Bay writer Helen Waaka, *Waitapu*, is to be launched in Waipawa this month.

For Helen, who also works as a nurse at the CHB Health Centre, it's the first time she has had her work published exclusively under her own name.

The former recipient of a Pikihiuia award for the Best Short Story in English, her work has previously appeared in a short fiction collection, *Huia Short Stories 9*, as well as *Huia 10* and *11* anthologies, but it's a different feeling being out on her own.

"There's nowhere to hide," she laughs.

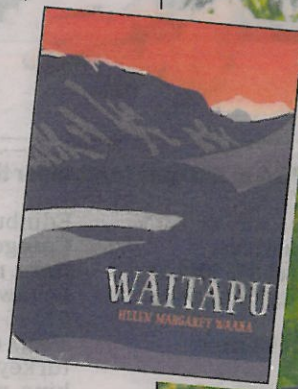
Waitapu is the culmination of four years hard work, writing, adding and refining to produce the finished result, an inter-connected set of 18 stories based in the small fictional rural town of Waitapu and centred around two sisters, Ruby and Rowena.

Helen says the book spans about 40 years of the girls' lives starting from their teens, but also brings in other points of view with different characters.

"There are teenage girls and boys, a young boy aged around eight or nine, an elderly woman who goes missing from a rest home, an elderly couple with failing health.

"There are also different themes — community, connection and a sense of belonging — all inevitable in a small town."

Described as an unsentimental portrait of rural life, issues such as



AUTHOR: Helen Waaka will be launching her new book at the Waipawa Library on October 15.

ageing, deprivation and family violence are addressed with compassion, and ultimately hope.

"I have worked in women's health, and the strength and courage I saw through that comes through in these stories," Helen says.

The book launch will be held at Waipawa Library on Thursday, October 15 from 5.30pm to about 6.30pm.

Helen and a representative from the publisher, Escalator Press, will be giving a talk and there will be copies of the book for sale.

Once released the book will be available for sale at Paper Plus in Waipukurau.