

Writers' journeys



San Penitito from Bishop Viard College reads her poem at the launch of *More of Us*, a book of poems by people who have come to New Zealand as migrants or refugees.

Thirteen Porirua high school students are the stars in the new collection of poems by 46 people from 29 countries.

The poems' writers range from well-established poets (some came to New Zealand in the 1960s), to three of the El Fares family, of Titahi Bay, who arrived here in 2016.

Mohammad El Fares was one of 10 writers who read their work to 200 people attending the launch of the book at the National Library in Wellington on Race Relations Day, March 21. Following so soon after the Christchurch shootings, the launch was held under armed guard.

"The book is, tragically, very timely," lead editor Adrienne Jansen said. "It's about who

are are, and who we want to be."

More of Us has a strong Porirua connection. As well as the students in the book, there are adult learners from English Language Partners in Porirua. "We wanted this collection to include not only experienced writers, but writers new to English and new to New Zealand," Jansen said. "So we ran workshops in Porirua high schools and at English Language Partners. We wanted this whole wide range of voices, and some of the most exciting work in the book is from these students."

Landing Press, which published the book, is also based in Porirua.

I Hear local writers read their work from *More of Us* and the editors talk about creating the book. PaperPlus, North City Mall, 5pm-6pm, June 4.

Photo: DAVE AGNEW