

# Christchurch's rising Matariki event star

Matariki (Maori New Year) will be celebrated in Christchurch next month with a festival and gala ball at Nga Hau e Wha national marae in Pages Rd.

It is signalled by the rise of the Pleiades constellation and the sighting of the next new moon.

The pre-dawn rise of Matariki can be seen in the last few days of May. New Year is marked by the sighting of the new moon in June.

The event, which runs from June 15 to 26, has been boosted by \$20,000 funding shared by the Hagley-Ferrymead and Burwood-Pegasus community boards.

Hagley-Ferrymead chairman Bob Todd described last year's inaugural festival as "an outstanding success".

More than 1200 children turned up at the day sessions and 900 people attended the two evening sessions.

Marae-based Manaaki Sounds Trust event convener Linda Ngata said barely two weeks after invitations had been sent to schools in the eastern suburbs last year, bookings were full.

This year's festival has been extended to two weeks to meet the demand.

The programme includes weekend wananga, community night events (Tuesdays and Thursdays) featuring star lore and star gazing, navigation and planting by the stars.

Youngsters will take part



**Starry wonder:** The Pleiades star constellation captured by the Royal Astronomical Society of NZ astrophotography section.

in Matariki story-time, art and craft, music, dance and performances.

The gala ball promised a glittering finale, Ms Ngata said.

"The ball is targeted more at the corporate sector to enable companies to be part of the culture experience," she said.

The festival at the national marae was driven by Christchurch City Council staff in the eastern suburbs.

A Burwood-Pegasus Community Board working party was asked to investigate options that would foster a sense of New Zealand pride and celebrate the cultural diversity of the district.

The festival is backed by the



**Matariki magic:** One of last year's inaugural Matariki stamp issue, marking the dawn of the Maori New Year.

council, Te Puni Kokiri (Ministry of Maori Affairs), Nga Hau e Wha and Te Runanga o Nga Maata Waka.



**Starry nights:** Children's librarian Katie O'Neill captured during last year's celebrations, helping Tevaea Maea make a star for Matariki (Maori New Year).

The cost of the project will top \$85,000.

Buoyed by last year's success, both community boards have rec-

ommended the festival go city-wide next year and open up the day events to all schools in the Christchurch area.