

2026 EXEC CANDIDATE PROFILES

Publicity Officer of RWNZ

Having served as the Publicity Officer since April 2026, and meeting the eligibility requirements set out in the Rules of RWNZ, Priti Garude is standing unopposed for re-appointment.

Priti will be elected as Publicity Officer of RWNZ without a ballot being required as per the Rules of RWNZ.



About Priti

Priti Garude is an experienced communications specialist and editor with over ten years of experience working across media, public sector, and community-focused organisations in New Zealand. Currently, she works as a Senior Communications Partner at Manukau Institute of Technology and Unitec. Prior to that, Priti has worked across a range of editorial and communications roles, including with Radio New Zealand, Governance NZ and Women on Boards NZ, Superdiversity Centre for Law, Policy and Business, India New Zealand Business Council and others.

Priti has a strong background in content creation, public relations, and internal communications, with a proven ability to translate complex ideas into clear, engaging narratives. Her work spans published articles, organisational storytelling, and communications support for leadership and stakeholder engagement.

Known for her attention to detail and audience-first approach, Priti is passionate about using storytelling as a tool to inform, connect, and create meaningful impact.

2026 EXEC CANDIDATE PROFILES

Election of Membership Secretary of RWNZ

Two nominations for Membership Secretary were received by the Secretary before 4th August 2026. These nominations are for Shelagh Merlin (acting Membership Secretary) and Lynda Tomalin who both meet eligibility requirements.



Shelagh Merlin

I've been an active member of Romance Writers Of New Zealand since 2016, starting off as a contest judge then as Chapter Short Story contest manager in 2017. Since then I have managed every one of our contests at least once and have spent five years as Contests Coordinator. In all those capacities, I have worked with WooCommerce to identify contest entries and download judging and scoresheet spreadsheets and am currently working with User Insights to identify and address membership issues.

Outside of RWNZ, I spent 2016 and 2017 as Membership Coordinator for Romance Writers of Australia and still judge some of their contests. I am also a member of the Australian Romance Readers Association executive committee.

I have a Bachelor of Arts in Asian Studies, a Graduate Certificate in Communication Print Media and Advanced Diplomas in both Workplace Training and Assessment and Business Administration.

My working life has involved roles in local government road safety project development and delivery, journalism, marketing and system development. While working for Dow Corning in the 1970's, I was actively involved in developing sales and marketing systems for their global offices.

I share our small rural property with one husband, three dogs, seven alpacas, numerous kangaroos and birds.

2026 EXEC CANDIDATE PROFILES

Election of Membership Secretary of RWNZ (cont.)



Lynda Tomalin

I believe my extensive background in administration systems and other volunteer roles makes me an ideal candidate for the Membership Secretary role with RWNZ.

I have worked in various administrative positions throughout my life. My current position is running health and safety systems for an engineering company with 20+ employees. My previous employment was with a community non-profit with one of my responsibilities being organising local events and promotions, such as the Christmas Parade. Both positions require excellent organisational skills, record keeping and attention to detail.

I have also held many volunteer roles, which put me in an excellent position to understand how committees operate and how I can contribute to the RWNZ organisation. Some of my volunteer roles have included our local school PTA Chair (four years) and NZ4x4 Trials Treasurer (2 years), event secretaries for National 4x4 trials and more.

RWNZ is an incredible organisation, providing excellent support to our amazing Romance Writers and beyond. I'd love to be able to contribute to the success of the organisation and Kiwi romance writers as a whole. Many hands make light work and I believe organisations benefit from members pitching in. It's my turn to raise my hand.

2026 EXEC CANDIDATE PROFILES

Secretary of RWNZ

Having served as the Secretary since February 2025, and meeting the eligibility requirements set out in the Rules of RWNZ, Shannon Forsyth (also known as Shannon Frances James) is standing unopposed for re-appointment.

Shannon will be elected as Secretary of RWNZ without a ballot being required as per the Rules of RWNZ.



About Shannon

Shannon joined RWNZ in 2024 and was fortunate to win the Pacific Hearts contest that year. She cannot understate the value that this organisation provided her as she entered the writing world. There is so much support and sharing of resources, but even the online connections have been incredible. She enjoys contributing to the amazing work that RWNZ does to support all writers of romance. She has volunteered as a Girl Guide leader in the past and knows how much organisations like these depend on volunteers. Known among her colleagues as *The Policy Queen*, she loves the challenges this role brings, learning new skills and helping shape the future of the RWNZ.

Lover of historical romance, Shannon is forever falling for regency gentlemen, but it's the independent heroines who truly capture her heart. She adores a heroine who brings a hero to his knees. Her award-winning stories are filled with romantic tension, charm, and a dash of humor – steamy scenes guaranteed. She lives in Queensland, Australia, with her wonderful family and has reached the age where birds are cool again. She can't drink caffeine without having a panic attack so relies on a healthy dose of sarcasm to get through. Her free time is filled with family activities, camping, and enjoying the outdoors.

2026 EXEC CANDIDATE PROFILES

Treasurer of RWNZ

Having served as the Treasurer for one term, and meeting the eligibility requirements set out in the Rules of RWNZ, Rajat Chawla is standing unopposed for re-appointment.

Rajat will be elected as Treasurer of RWNZ without a ballot being required as per the Rules of RWNZ.



About Raj

I was born and brought up in India, spent 11 wonderful years in New Zealand, and now call Sydney home. By profession, I am a finance leader with over a decade of experience in financial management and currently serve as a Financial Controller. With a keen eye for detail and a commitment to transparency, I enjoy bringing structure, clarity, and accountability to every role I take on—qualities I now bring to Romance Writers NZ as Treasurer.

While numbers may be my career, stories and romance run through my veins—something I happily blame on growing up with Bollywood. Though I may never write a novel myself, I deeply appreciate the way romance stories connect people, inspire hope, and celebrate love in all its forms.

Outside work, I am an explorer at heart. I love traveling and discovering new countries and cultures. My weekends are often spent hiking, playing sports, or finding new ways to stay active. I thrive in communities built on passion and creativity and I am excited to continue to contribute my skills to support Romance Writers NZ, helping members focus on their craft while ensuring the organisation's financial health.

2026 EXEC CANDIDATE PROFILES

Vice-President of RWNZ

Having served as the Vice-President for one term, and meeting the eligibility requirements set out in the Rules of RWNZ, Marija Jukich (also known as Marija Greenhill) is standing unopposed for re-appointment.

Marija will be elected as Vice-President of RWNZ without a ballot being required as per the Rules of RWNZ.



About Marija

For the past decade, Romance Writers of New Zealand has been my creative home, my tribe — a place where I've grown as a writer, found encouragement in every setback, and celebrated every milestone. Now, I'm ready to give back by serving as Vice President and helping our community continue to thrive.

Writing as M. Greenhill, I create paranormal thrillers with a dash of romance, as well as contemporary romance. I have published three novels and was a finalist in the Koru Award for Best Debut Novel. My work has also been recognised with first place in Editors' Choice for Great Beginnings, second in Agents' Choice, and a finalist in Pacific Hearts, and I was a Watty's award winner for most voracious reads.

A proud member of RWNZ for around ten years, I have served on the organising committee for five national conferences and recently stepped into the role of Webmaster. These experiences have deepened my appreciation for the dedication it takes to run a vibrant, supportive organisation.

Professionally, I work as a Product Manager in the IT division of a government regulator, bringing extensive management, governance, and project delivery experience. I am committed to supporting both emerging and established writers, ensuring every member gains the most from our wonderful RWNZ community.

2026 EXEC CANDIDATE PROFILES

Election of the President of RWNZ

Two nominations for President were received by the Secretary before 4th August 2026. These nominations are for Kelly Lyndon (President) and Courtney Ieremia.

Having served as the President for two terms and meeting the eligibility requirements set out in the Rules of RWNZ, Kelly is standing for re-election. Meeting the eligibility requirements set out in the Rules for RWNZ, Courtney is standing for election.

Kelly Lyndon



Kelly Lyndon has served as President of Romance Writers of New Zealand since September 2024 and is seeking re-election to continue building on the progress made over the past two years.

Outside of RWNZ, Kelly works as a career contractor specialising as a senior Executive Assistant and Board Secretary, partnering with senior executives and Boards on governance, strategy, and organisational operations. Throughout her career she has worked with organisations such as Southern Cross, Auckland Museum, Ngāti Whātua, Vector, and she currently works at SkyCity Entertainment Group. She also has a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature.

Kelly is an award-nominated author and is passionate about ensuring RWNZ remains a welcoming, professional, and sustainable organisation for writers at every stage of their careers. During her presidency, Kelly has worked alongside an exceptional Executive and volunteer team to deliver a number of significant initiatives, including launching the new-look RWNZ website, welcoming HQ (formerly Harlequin) back as a conference sponsor after an eight-year absence, bringing in-person pitching back to conference, acquiring three high-quality online writing courses from Steffanie Holmes (available to members from September), forming a new partnership with the New Zealand Society of Authors (giving RWNZ members a 50% discount on NZSA membership from 1 September), leading the development and adoption of RWNZ's new Constitution to ensure compliance with the Incorporated Societies Act 2022, and leading further governance improvements across the organisation, including overseeing the publication of RWNZ's new Annual Report.

Kelly is proud of what has been achieved through the dedication of RWNZ's volunteers and believes the organisation is well positioned for the future. If re-elected, she looks forward to continuing to strengthen RWNZ, support our volunteers, and create even more opportunities for our members to learn, connect, and succeed.

2026 EXEC CANDIDATE PROFILES

Election of President of RWNZ (cont.)



Courtney Ieremia

Kia ora RWNZ whānau! I'm Courtney Ieremia, and I write steamy contemporary award-winning romance under Courtney Clark Michaels. I've been a passionate member of RWNZ since 2017, and have held a number of roles within the organisation over that time. I was a member of the 2024 Ōtautahi Christchurch Conference Committee, and I've been involved in RWNZ contests at every level; as an entrant, a judge, and an organiser. I've MC'd and delivered speeches at our awards dinners, and if you've ever heard me speak at them you'll know that my love and respect for Romance Writers of New Zealand knows no bounds. I've been open about how the stories we tell, and the community we share, have shaped me; and why I believe in the redeeming power of love at all stages of life. I would be honoured to pour more of my own love into RWNZ as an enthusiastic and energetic member of the exec, and help guide other authors on their journeys with clear, supportive, inclusive, and engaging content and events for our members.