

Niki Francis completed her PhD in history at the Australian National University in 2015 with a thesis about the New Zealand-born Australian artist Rosalie Gascoigne — *“My own sort of heaven”*: Rosalie Gascoigne’s stellar rise to artistic acclaim. Her thesis explores the artist’s economically privileged but emotionally difficult early life in New Zealand, and the social and historical conditions in Australia from the 1940s to the 1970s that made possible her rise to fame after her first exhibition at the age of 57.

Just as Gascoigne came late to art, Niki took up professional history and biography in her late 50s. Gascoigne’s art evolved over a lifetime of looking and exploring her own creativity; Niki’s biographical writing developed over years of fascination with people and their stories through a wide range of experiences from senior management to hospice chaplaincy, refugee resettlement officer to teaching English as a second language. Originally from New Zealand, Niki has also lived in Iraq, the United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium, and now Australia.

During her PhD candidacy, Niki worked for four years with the Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB) as a biographical researcher and writer; and researched, wrote and edited for *The ADB’s story* (eds. Melanie Nolan and Christine Fernon, ANU Press, 2013). She is a regular contributor to the Australian Women’s Register, having written entries for the Canberra centenary exhibition *From Lady Denman to Katy Gallagher: A century of women’s contributions to Canberra* (2013); and was co-writer with Dr Patricia Clarke on *Canberra Women in World War I: Community at home, nurses abroad*.

Niki currently lives in Canberra where she is self-employed historian. Current projects include assisting Professor Helen Ennis with research for her biography of photographer Olive Cotton, an exhibition project with the Waipu Museum in Northland, New Zealand and preparing her thesis for publication. Niki also works as an oral history interviewer for the National Library of Australia.