



# The Road to

Maths teacher, counsellor, author, publisher, company director, and finally mum.

This rather twisting and turning road Rochelle Manners has been travelling has been knowing that at each turn the Lord is in control. He is there to open doors for her to meet and assist people to reach their goals. When others reach their goals it means that Rochelle has achieved her goals as well. The many roads travelled enabled Rochelle to experience and understand the highs and lows in many diverse areas.

Every road travelled has been training for the next step. Nothing in her life has been a dead end but has led to further opportunities in helping someone else. But isn't that the way the Lord works? No experience is wasted, he uses our every talent and training to further his kingdom and our growth.

After three years teaching Maths at Marist College Rosalie, an all boys' school, and Brisbane State High School, a co-ed school, Rochelle felt a call to work as a guidance counsellor in schools. "I didn't mind continuing to teach but I wanted to fulfil my desire to help people by being a counsellor. I found myself always being a listening ear to students when they were in need."

Moving into the area of counselling meant Rochelle needed to expand her knowledge and learning so she undertook to study a Masters of Education, focusing on counselling, at the University of Queensland. These studies challenged Rochelle by an increased self-awareness. "I thoroughly enjoyed counselling training, during which I worked as a volunteer counsellor, and as a pregnancy supporter." Hence the anthologies on pregnancy, namely *'Unborn Beauty'*. (See Book Review)



Rochelle Manners

Publishing and writing is a journey and people not in the industry may not actually realise what is involved. Rochelle started her journey as an author, by self-publishing her own books, and has acquired a wealth of information through the journey to start her own independent trade publishing house, Wombat Books.

Wombat Books is a small independent publishing house with a growing range of products including children and young adult books, poetry and anthologies. To develop the overwhelming interest in writing and publishing for the Christian market, Rochelle started a specific imprint for Christian books, Even Before Publishing.

The desire to start this publishing house came from Rochelle's commitment to provide an avenue for Australian authors to see their books in print. Rochelle explains, "There are more and more authors going down the self-publishing line, mostly because they believe there are no Christian publishing houses left in Australia. Well there are a couple of problems with this. Marketing can be a real struggle unless you are a prolific speaker and even then it can be a challenge.

# a Publishing House

Connecting with other writers is difficult, where to find them, where to go? Knowing how to self-publish well is crucial if you are going to do it. Let's face it even if the book is from God it can be a challenge to get it out there successfully. So let's lift the face of Christian writing and publishing in Australia, let's make it really good. We want Christian books to have a good name, how else can we reach out through it?"

Jeff Townsend, author of Bailey's Crossing, and trade selling to Christian bookstores for over 20 years quotes:

*"Book publishing is a minefield for those not involved in the industry, which is most people. Authors all too often go down the track of self-publishing and often end up with an overpriced book that is of lesser quality than that available in stores. Or else they sign up to an overseas 'vanity' publisher that promises the world and generally fails to deliver. We need to encourage quality Australian authors and facilitate for them to be better, write better and do better."*

To partially solve the marketing issue Rochelle has started Light the Dark: the Australian Christian party plan. *Light the Dark is a brand new Australian Christian Party Plan. We carry a unique range of books, gifts, jewellery, clothing and much more, all produced by Australian businesses, authors and designers. Get your Christian and family friendly products from an all-Australian company working with family businesses all across Australia. Check it out at [christianpartyplan.com](http://christianpartyplan.com)*

Driving Rochelle is the need to create opportunity for people travelling the road in the field of writing. "I hope I provide an opportunity at least to give hope that publication can occur in Australia. So often it is believed that there is nowhere to have a Christian book published in Australia. As more authors choose to self-publish it is becoming clearer as to the difficulty of Australian books. While my publishing house is small and cannot accept huge numbers of books we do our best" she states.

Rochelle is not travelling alone. Her husband and two children are by her side. ("Please note here, I want more than two children too!") Rochelle sums up her journey: "Each role has different opportunities. My biggest real advantage is that while working a business at home I am able to stay home with my young children."

Rochelle continues, "I want to add something about Australian authors supporting Australians.... If Australian writers and readers bought Australian products and supported locals it would open the door to a more fruitful Australian readership and Christian writing community. I believe through this network of supporting Christians in our own country it allows us to stand up and work on developing our Christian ethos, faith and principles so we can take them to the wider market."

In case there is someone reading Rochelle's story, who wishes to travel as a writer, here are some guidelines.

All publishers:

- Receive more submissions than they can publish. So make sure your submission is exciting and stands out – this helps it to get noticed.
- Are busy so don't send too much – or check whether they want the entire manuscript or just the first few pages, make sure you include a synopsis.

Even Before Publishing specifically:

- Always include a SSAE as our manuscripts are all returned if not used.
- Include a bio and any ideas for promotion.
- If you were originally planning to self-publish tell us about your original thoughts, do you have speaking plans, and so on.
- Check out the rest online!

Christian publishers in Australia – to find some publishers, check out the links on the *Light the Dark* website. Australian Christian publishers do exist; supporting them will help more Aussies to succeed in being published here in Australia, instead of having to take manuscripts overseas.

For more information go to:

[www.wombatbooks.com.au](http://www.wombatbooks.com.au) or  
[www.evenbeforepublishing.com](http://www.evenbeforepublishing.com)

Submission guidelines are on the websites. Enquiries to [info@wombatbooks.com.au](mailto:info@wombatbooks.com.au).

Rochelle is the editor of *Unborn Beauty: Celebrating Pregnancy and Parenthood*, and *Even Before You Were Born: A Christian Reflection on Pregnancy*. She is the author of children's books including *Chirpy's New Home*, and writes for the educational market.