

This year marks the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Australia and Nepal.

During the last five decades the relationship has expanded considerably. Australia established a diplomatic mission in Nepal in 1984. The establishment of a diplomatic mission of Nepal in Canberra in 2007 cemented our ties.

Australia strongly supports Nepal's peace process which we earnestly hope will result in Nepal achieving lasting peace, stability, and a political environment conducive to economic and social development. We look forward to the milestone of the promulgation of a new constitution in Nepal this year.

As a country with more than one hundred years of experience as a federal parliamentary democracy, Australia stands ready to support Nepal through this transition. To mark the 50th anniversary, Australia will establish an Electoral Resource Centre at the Election Commission in Kathmandu. The Centre will increase community understanding of the electoral process and help entrench democracy in Nepal. In 2009 we welcomed the establishment of an Australia-Nepal Parliamentary Friendship Group in the Federal Parliament in Canberra.

Australia's development cooperation program with Nepal began in the 1960s. Our assistance in developing Nepal's forestry sector remains a significant triumph. Since then, Australia has made practical contributions to Nepal's development, focusing on areas such as primary education, health and poverty alleviation. Australia will continue to work with the Government of Nepal and other donors to improve access to quality health and education services which are critical to Millennium Development Goal progress. They build the basis for sustainable peace in Nepal by helping to address historic patterns of exclusion.



PHOTO: © Suresh Sharma

## MESSAGE FROM AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR, HE SUSAN GRACE

Himalayan Foundation, a number of whose members are featured in the book. I believe this collection of stories of notable Australian mountaineers is a fitting way to celebrate 50 years of friendship between Australia and Nepal.

Australia continues to impress on the Government of Nepal the need for greater focus on public financial management and governance systems to help ensure that funding has maximum impact on services for the Nepalese people.

We are also proud of the ongoing collaboration between the Tilganga Institute of Ophthalmology in Kathmandu and the Fred Hollows Foundation, which has been at the forefront of developing safe and cheap procedures for cataract surgery in the region. Tilganga is a centre of excellence and a mark of enduring friendship between our two countries.

People-to-people links between our countries are growing strongly, particularly in education. Over the years, many high-achieving Nepalese have studied in Australia through Australian Government scholarships and, this year, a formal alumni network will be launched at the Australian Embassy in Kathmandu. There are also a significant number of Nepalese students studying privately in Australia.

Australians have always enjoyed travel and trekking in Nepal and it is encouraging to see Australian tourist numbers rapidly increasing again as Nepal approaches its "Visit Nepal Year" in 2011. Over the years, the Embassy in Kathmandu has played an important role in providing consular assistance to Australian citizens in Nepal.

This book honours a special group of Australians who have made their mark through mountaineering achievements, as well as the special friendships forged with the people of Nepal through philanthropic works. The spirit of "giving something back" is embodied in the Australian