Prime Minister Howard and President Putin reaffirmed the importance of the bilateral relationship between Australia and the Russian Federation during their historic meeting today.

President Putin's visit to Australia - the first ever by a Russian Head of State - is taking place at a time of the 200th anniversary of the first documented visit to Australia by Russians, the 150th anniversary of the establishment of consular relations and the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations.

Prime Minister Howard and President Putin noted that their countries shared a number of characteristics, including similar-sized economies, their importance as global suppliers of resources and energy, and a common interest in peace and security in the Asia Pacific region. They agreed the visit would provide impetus for expanded bilateral cooperation across a wider field of issues of mutual interest.

The leaders welcomed the signing of a nuclear cooperation agreement, which will permit the export of Australian uranium to Russia for use in civil nuclear power plants and provide a framework for broader scientific cooperation. They acknowledged their countries' roles and responsibilities in promoting the safe and secure use of nuclear energy.

Prime Minister Howard and President Putin noted that the Australian and Russian economies were experiencing strong economic growth. They mentioned significant growth of bilateral trade in goods and services in recent years.

Prime Minister Howard and President Putin also welcomed the significant expansion in investment by businesses from both countries across a range of industry sectors, including mining, manufacturing and construction as well as financial services. They reaffirmed both countries' interest in further stimulating the flow of investment in both directions by concluding negotiations on an Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement as a matter of priority.

Prime Minister Howard and President Putin confirmed their commitment to further expanding bilateral trade and investment through the Joint Russia-Australia Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation. They agreed to hold the next meeting of the commission in Russia in 2008.

Prime Minister Howard and President Putin noted that for both countries, prosperity, living standards and job growth depended on the international competitiveness of their goods and services and access to global markets. They agreed to continue efforts in APEC and other forums to promote the further opening of markets across all sectors.

Prime Minister Howard and President Putin recognised that both countries had a shared interest in the pursuit of stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific. President Putin welcomed Australia's efforts to promote democracy and good governance in South East Asia and the South Pacific.

Prime Minister Howard commended Russia for her role in...
Prime Minister Howard welcomed Russia’s role in overcoming difficulties in the six-party talks. Prime Minister Howard and President Putin welcomed progress in implementation of the 13 February six-party action plan, including the shutdown of the DPRK’s Yongbyon nuclear facilities and the return of IAEA inspectors. Noting this progress, the two leaders called for the complete and prompt implementation of six-party talks commitments by all relevant parties.

Prime Minister Howard and President Putin reaffirmed both countries' common interest in combating terrorism, both in their own countries and regions, and globally. They looked forward to enhanced bilateral counter-terrorism dialogue, building on cooperation in multilateral forums such as the APEC Counter-Terrorism Taskforce and the G8 Counter-Terrorism Action Group.

Prime Minister Howard and President Putin welcomed the increased levels of direct contact between Australians and Russians, including through increased two-way travel for study and tourism. They agreed both governments would consider ways of expanding such people-to-people contact.

President Putin commended the Australian government for its strong leadership of APEC during 2007 and for its successful hosting of APEC meetings, leading into the forthcoming APEC Leaders Meeting. Prime Minister Howard welcomed Russia’s interest in hosting APEC in 2012.