



The Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon Alexander Downer MP, welcomes the Berlin Bears to Sydney, Australia.



I am delighted to welcome the Berlin Buddy Bears to Sydney on behalf of the Australian people. Each bear represents a member-country of the United Nations, symbolising the universal principles of peace, freedom and friendship. The bears' visit to Sydney reflects Australia's close ties with Germany and more broadly its good standing in the world community.

The Buddy Bears also reminds us of the dignity and inalienable rights of children. The UN Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that children around the world are entitled to special care and assistance. Proceeds from auctioning the bears will go to worthy causes, including UNICEF and other children's aid agencies.

Australia's relationship with Germany is one of the warmest and most significant bilateral relationships. Australia and Germany enjoy an open and cooperative relationship underpinned by extensive political, economic and cultural linkages. Germany has been a significant source of migrants to our country and Australia is a popular overseas destination for German tourists and students. The Australian Government is keen to expand further its ties with Germany, including in government, cultural and commercial spheres.