

**Premier & Trade
The Hon. Peter Beattie MP**

16 March 2005

'Karoo' Named QLD's Newest And 'Cutest' Ambassador

Karoo -the first koala joey born at Riverbanks Zoo in South Carolina - will be publicly unveiled at its naming ceremony in Queensland's Sister State today, (March 15 US time) Premier Peter Beattie said today.

"Karoo is clearly our cutest ambassador," said the Premier.

Karoo is the progeny of Lottie, one of two female koalas from Queensland, and Mirai, a male koala from Japan.

"The koala colony at Riverbanks Zoo was established because of a State Government gift to South Carolina and we are thrilled to see that it is a success," he said.

The Premier said Karoo's naming was a collaborative effort in the spirit of the Sister State relationship.

"Once the birth was known late last year, pre-school to Year 7 students throughout Gold Coast schools were invited to submit their suggested names.

"Students from elementary schools in Richland and Lexington Counties in South Carolina then got to vote for their favourite name from a shortlist of four.

"Last year's Class 2J from The Southport School submitted the winning name and the students were rewarded for their efforts with a special wildlife incursion program from the David Fleay Wildlife Park.

"The name has no particular significance and is simply a combination of koala and kangaroo. Karoo's gender is unknown at this time," he said

Riverbanks Zoo Executive Director Satch Krantz said "Riverbanks supporters are keenly aware of the uniqueness of the Koala Knockabout exhibit, and I am confident that they will be equally proud that Riverbanks has successfully produced a baby koala."

"I anticipate that the joey will be the darling of South Carolina."

"In September 2004, keepers first observed the joey in Lottie's pouch. Joeys remain in the pouch for up to seven months before emerging.

"After months of anxious waiting, the joey first appeared outside the pouch at the end of February and Riverbanks Zoo staff and visitors are delighted to be seeing the young koala."

Over the coming weeks, zoo visitors will see the joey moving in and out of Lottie's pouch, increasing the amount of time spent outside until finally leaving the pouch completely and climbing onto its mother's back.

Riverbanks Zoo is one of only a few North American zoos with koalas and the emergence of its first joey from the pouch marks a major milestone in the development of the colony.

Mirai, the progeny of an earlier Queensland Government gift, was transferred to Riverbanks Zoo from Hirakawa Zoo in Japan, in 2002. The two females, Lottie and

Killarney, were transferred from the David Fleay Wildlife Park on Queensland's Gold Coast in 2003.

[Riverbanks Zoo's koala webcam will go live at 11.00 am 15 March 2004 South Carolina time Visitors to the website will be able to view live camera feed of Lottie and the joey and a generic koala clip. The website will be available Thursday, March 17 (Queensland Time).

A URL has been set-up for Australia - <http://koala.energeticminds.com>]

16 March 2005

Media contact: Premier's Office 3224 4500

MESSAGE FROM PETER BEATTIE - PREMIER OF QUEENSLAND

[To be read by my good friend and our honorary Ambassador John Durst]

Today is indeed a special day in our Sister-State relationship.

The bonds of friendship between Queensland and South Carolina have now taken a unique step forward.

Like proud new parents we can both share in the joy of this moment and marvel at the cute cuddly joey Karoo.

This joey - apart from being a very special attraction at Riverbanks Zoo - is a special symbol of the bond between our two great States.

On behalf of all Queenslanders we at this exciting time wish Governor Mark Sanford and all in South Carolina the very best.

Our formal Sister State relationship began in May 1999.

From then until today that has led to trade, education and business exchanges and now we add a cute marsupial.

Much has been done to get to this moment and we need to thank David Fleay Wildlife Park at the Gold Coast and Riverbanks Zoo Executive Director Satch Krantz and his staff for their efforts.

The Zoo - through its breeding program - deserve great praise for its efforts in taking a native Australian marsupial to now delivering a fair dinkum South Carolinian!

Also to have had the children in both our States involved in Karoo's naming process has been a fitting touch.

It is a special time for you and we look forward to you coming to visit us in sunny Queensland.

PETER BEATTIE MP
PREMIER AND MINISTER FOR TRADE