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Kuwaiti royal just getting started with hotel buy in Melbourne

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Hotels

HEIR to the Kuwaiti royal throne, Sheik Abdulla al-Mubarak al-Sabah, yesterday flagged more Australian hotel investments after opening his first in Melbourne's suburban southeast.

The member of the ruling family of Kuwait said he was already proceeding with plans to build a \$70 million hotel in Brisbane next to the Myer Centre, and more hotels around Australia were likely to follow.

"Hotels are fun and Australia is a great place to be," he said.

Sheik Abdulla made the comments at the opening of his \$26 million Hotel Ibis at Glen Waverley, 22km from the CBD.

The Sheik is no stranger to Melbourne, already owning two bulky goods centres, a lifestyle centre and a waterfront block at Port Melbourne that is earmarked for a hotel.

He said Australia's resources boom made future hotel investments in resource-rich states very attractive.

Sheik Abdulla's private Action Hotels Group, launched four years ago, specialises in three



In the market: Sheik Abdulla al-Mubarak al-Sabah

and four-star hotels in partnerships with global hotel operators Accor and IHG through the Ibis, Novotel and Holiday Inn brands in Kuwait, Jordan, Bahrain, Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Australia.

The group has completed two hotels and is involved in the development of 11 more.

Sheik Abdulla said he started the hotel group because mid-market hotels were nearly non-

existent in the Middle East. "With the growth in inter-Middle East travel, a proliferation of budget airlines and an influx of foreign business travelers, I believed there was certainly an opportunity to develop this segment of hotels across our region and elsewhere," he said.

"Our focus is on providing quality accommodation at exceptional value in central and convenient locations."