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Brief: ETSA (A)

ETSA chief wants to embrace state

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CHIEF REPORTER

THE chief of the Hong Kong-based firm which controls ETSA Utilities yesterday declared his company wanted to "feel part of the state".

In a rare interview, Mr H.L. Kam said Cheung Kong Infrastructure Holdings wanted to "participate" and "be perceived as welcome here".

In Adelaide to award 21 university exchange scholarships to South Australians, Mr Kam, 59, did not directly refer to ETSA's ownership or electricity distribution business.

But he said the \$7.5 million Endeavour Australia Cheung Kong Scholarship program, through which more than 90 young Australians will study in Asia this year, was evidence that his company was a good corporate citizen.

"For us to work in so many places in the world, the important thing is to participate in the local (area) as much as possible," he told *The Advertiser*.

"The important thing, I think, is we want to be perceived as welcome here."

The Cheung Kong Infrastructure Holdings group managing director was the guest of honour at the Old Parliament House ceremony, where he was joined by a clutch of state pol-

HING LAM (H.L.) KAM

■ Deputy managing director Cheung Kong (Holdings) since 1993

■ Group managing director Cheung Kong Infrastructure Holdings Limited

■ An executive director of Hutchison Whampoa Limited and Hongkong Electric Holdings Limited

■ Holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Engineering and a Masters degree in Business Administration

■ Brother-in-law of Li Ka-shing, Cheung Kong (Holdings) chairman

Source: Cheung Kong (Holdings) website

itical and education leaders. They included Premier Mike Rann, two Cabinet ministers, senior Opposition figures and three university vice-chancellors.

Mr Rann, who fiercely opposed ETSA's privatisation, welcomed Mr Kam as a "great friend".

"I saw for myself in Hong Kong how the (Cheung Kong) group has a fantastic commitment to education and science," Mr Rann said

This highlighted a warming of relations since Mr Rann in late 1999 questioned Cheung Kong's links "to the Chinese Communist regime" and "their employment and environmental records".

At the time, Mr Rann also angered some within Labor by saying the \$3.5 billion, 200-year lease of ETSA Utilities "could perhaps see the Red Guard rejoicing each time South Australians turn on their power".

Yesterday, Mr Kam emphasised the friendship with Mr Rann by posing for photographs with the Premier and scholarship recipients.

"We are very pleased to have the chance to contribute this," Mr Kam said. "We feel having a program like this, by giving opportunity for youngsters before they work, it will be very good for them."

Cheung Kong Infrastructure Holdings and Hongkong Electric Holdings, part of the Cheung Kong Group of companies, own 51 per cent of ETSA Utilities.

The scholarships every year allow 70 Asian students to come to Australia and at least 70 Australians to study in Asia.

The program is jointly funded by the Cheung Kong Group and the Federal Government.



OPPORTUNITY: H.L. Kam with scholarship recipients Leon Marro, William Sitarenos and Rachel Bullen yesterday

Picture: BRENTON EDWARDS