

# Narev savours beauty of Top End ties



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Timmy 'Djawa' Burarrwanga and Ian Narev at Shady Beach in Yirrkala yesterday as part of a bid to cement ties in northeast Arnhem Land

## EXCLUSIVE

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HE may regularly travel the world and descend from the scenic shores of New Zealand, but Ian Narev has fallen in love with Australia's Top End.

"The No 1 thing you notice, certainly where I am, is the physical beauty of this place is extraordinary," the Commonwealth Bank chief said yesterday during a break in a busy itinerary.

"It's really magic." Rather than the US or Asia, Mr Narev is on a trip to the region around Bawaka in the Northern Territory after an invitation from Timmy "Djawa" Burarrwanga by way of "message stick", a traditional Aboriginal form of communication.

Along with visiting staff and customers, Mr Narev is meeting not-for-profit community groups and their extended business interests as the CBA aims to deepen its ties with indigenous communities.

"Within the indigenous Australian community groups there's a lot of really good entrepreneurial thinking going on about differ-

ent things that can be done. It's very impressive," he says.

One not-for-profit that CBA works with is Jawun, with the nation's biggest bank sending staff on six-week secondments to the northeast Arnhem Land to work with a range of organisations. It also sends staff on cultural awareness programs at the Bawaka homeland, Mr Burarrwanga's family homeland.

But Mr Narev says the financial services sector can do more. "In some ways you can never do enough. We're certainly not sitting here and saying there's a defined amount we would like to do,"

he told *The Australian*. "I think there's always more we can do and we're always looking for the right ways to get involved that provide a bit of benefit to the community in terms of things we know, but also give our people the opportunity to learn and develop.

"We're broadening our relationship with a number of groups."

The banks have similar programs. ANZ recruits more than 700 indigenous trainees and Westpac seconds nearly 600 of its staff to indigenous communities through various partnerships.

CBA seconded 13 staff to Jawun last year, 19 this year, and will send

36 next year. National Australia Bank offers internships as part of its "responsibility to help address indigenous disadvantage".

The big four banks will this year post about \$27 billion in profits. But in a fiercely competitive industry, Mr Narev said it was up to all large corporates to do more with indigenous Australians.

"For us, honestly, this isn't a competitive 'whose doing what, can we do more, can we do different?' This is all part of our view as a big Australian company," he said.

"We need to have highly valued strong relationships with the first people of the country."