ABSTRACT
We present a case of a severe hand infection over the thenar eminence in a remote Australian location. He had an excellent outcome following debridement and delayed primary closure with a split thickness skin graft.

KEYWORDS
Hand infection, tropical infection, remote centre, palmar skin graft

Case report
A 39-year-old indigenous male presented with a dominant hand infection to our remote hospital. While working on a car battery, he reported a week-old puncture wound to the first intertriginous space. He was a smoker but denied diabetes. He was afebrile. On examination, he had good radial pulses but marked swelling to the right thenar eminence (Fig 1a). He had mildly raised inflammatory markers (WCC 12 x10^9/L, CRP 42mg/L). There was no fracture on the plain radiograph. He was started empirically on IV piperacillin-tazobactam.

He was taken to the theatre for wound debridement (Fig 1b). His swabs subsequently grew methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus and group A Streptococcus. He could not tolerate negative pressure dressings due to pain and was treated with daily saline dressings. A week later, a split-thickness skin graft was harvested from his arm for wound closure (Fig 1c). He was placed in a thumb spica splint for 2 days to prevent wound contracture and then given range of motion hand exercises. Two months later, the graft had healed completely, and he had a full return of a function (Fig 1d).

Discussion
Severe soft tissue infections in hand are rare and usually associated with comorbidities like diabetes (1,2), IV drug use (3), or advanced age (1,2). We report a severe polymicrobial hand infection in a remote tropical environment in a young, healthy male.

Conclusion
We present a case of a severe hand infection over the thenar eminence in a remote Australian location. After debridement and delayed primary closure with a split-thickness skin graft, he had an excellent outcome.

Funding
This work did not receive any grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Conflict of interest
There are no conflicts of interest to declare by any of the authors of this study.
References

