Reviewer's report

Title: Home and community care services: a major opportunity for preventive health care?

Version: 1 Date: 16 February 2010

Reviewer: Melissa Lindeman

Reviewer's report:

Minor Essential Revisions

1. On page 6, paragraph 2 there is a duplicated sentence that should be deleted (sentence begins with “HACC MDS data for the period 1 July 2003…”).

Discretionary Revisions

2. On page 6, paragraph 2 it may be useful to explain why there is only 75% of coverage of HACC service providers in the HACC MDS.

3. In the background section, the authors claim that while there has been some emphasis in prevention, particularly in falls, lifestyle modification is not a major current focus of HACC service provision. However, there have been some recent policy changes in Australia, particularly at the State level, that recognises the role that HACC can play in health promotion. The ‘active service model’ in Victoria is “based on the premise that clients have the potential to make gains in their wellbeing and that the HACC service system can improve its capacity to support this” (http://www.health.vic.gov.au/hacc/projects/asm_project.htm, Victorian Department of Human Services website accessed 16th February 2010). The research is therefore timely to support these directions, but perhaps there should be some acknowledgment that policy-makers are coming to recognise the health promotion role the program can play.

4. On page 8, the authors show that educational attainment is not linked with HACC service use. The conclusion (page 14) could therefore be reworded to more clearly state which socio-demographic factors are linked to HACC use.

5. The findings that HACC use increases with remoteness and that people of Indigenous origin are more likely than others to be HACC clients are very significant (Page 9, paragraphs 2 and 3). The prevailing view has been that geographic remoteness and Indigenous background are barriers to accessing HACC.

6. The program implications of the U-shaped association with HACC service use and body weight (page 12) could be given more prominence in the conclusion given that nutrition and meals provision is a current major focus of HACC.

7. Given the significance of the findings I suggest that the question mark be removed from the title. This positions the paper more strongly at the outset by
sounding less tentative.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.