Reviewer’s report

Title: Social support and age influence distress outcomes differentially across urban-regional and remote Australia

Version: 2 Date: 28 March 2012

Reviewer: Deborah Turnbull

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

The main issue for me is to do with the sampling frame, which includes a cross-sectional and prospective component. I think that the paper would really benefit from some sort of diagram to summarise the exact nature of the sampling frame. Related to this is the fact that the response rates were relatively low and indeed differential. Also, it’s not clear what the figures for response rates refer to. Are these figures for the baseline samples? This requires some form of consideration. The other critical issue is with respect to the inconsistent depictions of remoteness. Given that this is a critical aspect of the paper, this variable needs to be considered in a clear and consistent fashion. The paper is very long, especially the discussion. Maybe this could be sharpened up a little. Overall, this is a strong paper. The question posed is original, important and well defined and the findings should help us to better understand the knotty issue of the relationship between remoteness, social support and distress. The work is being conducted within the context of a large population based study with sound measures.

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