Reviewer's report

**Title:** Socio-demographic factors and psychological distress in Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian adults aged 18-64 years: analysis of national survey data

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 9 September 2011

**Reviewer:** Laura A Pratt

**Reviewer's report:**

This paper is well-written, well-referenced and quite interesting.

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?  
   Yes

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?  
   yes

3. Are the data sound?  
   yes

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?  
   yes

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?  
   Yes, except I would strongly suggest adding the word “may” to the first sentence of the last paragraph of the conclusions, so that it will read “… to address factors such as racism which may act as determinants…” This is because this is a hypothesis of the authors that is not directly tested in this study.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?  
   Yes, although I can think of a couple they missed, see minor essential revisions

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?  
   Yes, the report is well-referenced

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?  
   yes

9. Is the writing acceptable?  
   Yes, the report is extremely well-written

**Discretionary revisions:**

I found the first sentence of the 2nd paragraph on page 20 (9th paragraph in
discussion) to be somewhat confusing. Maybe it could be re-written to be clearer.

Minor essential revisions:

1. I would like the authors to add the word “may” to the first sentence of the last paragraph of the conclusions, so that it will read “… to address factors such as racism which may act as determinants…” This is because this is a hypothesis of the authors that is not directly tested in this study.

2. The abbreviation CD is not defined in the text, only in the list of abbreviations. Please define it the first time it is used.

3. In the footnotes to tables 3 and 4 as well as the description of the logistic regressions in the statistical analysis section, the authors state that they adjusted by “age groups.” I assume this means the 5 age groups used in the figures, but they should state this- something like “adjusted for age in 5 categories.”

4. I have a couple of limitations all having to do with the measurement of VHPD that I think should be added. First, if I understood correctly, the changes in wording for the K5 were only made in the NATSIHS and not the NHS, so the two groups of participants did not have exactly the same wording. Also, it is possible that there was some context effect going on since the 5 questions stood alone on the NATSIHS while they were extracted from a total of 10 questions in the NHS. A study in the U.S. National Household Survey on Drug Use and Health showed that K6 scores varied depending on where in the interview the questions were placed, with additional mental health questions or without additional mental health questions. See: http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/2k4state/appA.htm#A.7

5. I also think it is a limitation that should be mentioned that the data on the two groups that are compared come from two different surveys. The surveys could not be similar in absolutely every respect and there is no way to know how any differences might affect the comparisons/conclusions.

6. In the last paragraph of page 22, the authors compare mean scores in other studies of Indigenous Australians. However, K5 scores are compared with K10 scores without any explanation. Are they equivalent? Is one higher than the other?

7. There is a typo in the last sentence of the middle paragraph on page 23. It states “of economic value” and it should say “or economic value.”

Major compulsory revisions: none

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I declare that I have no competing interests.