Reviewer's report

Title: Socio-economic patterns of overweight, obesity but not thinness persist from childhood to adolescence in a 6-year longitudinal cohort of Australian schoolchildren from 2007 to 2012

Version: 3
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Reviewer: Adrian Cameron

Reviewer's report:

The authors have changed the research question based on the comments of both reviewers and the validity of the conclusions has consequently improved substantially. The focus of the paper is now whether the SEP gradient in body weight is maintained over 6 years. I have the following comments:

- As both reviewers commented (and as acknowledged by the authors), the study design is not able to determine whether there is a plateau in the prevalence over time. The following paragraph in the discussion should therefore be deleted: "The study found no longitudinal changes in overweight and obesity prevalence over the six year period, suggesting a plateau, which has been reported recently in a number of Australian studies [18, 20, 30, 36, 37] and in a range of international studies [14-18, 38-40]. Thus, it appears that in regional NSW, as in many other regions of the Westernized world, childhood overweight and obesity does not appear to be increasing, but is rather showing stabilizing trends."

I also recommend deleting the following paragraph: "In light of the current findings, we recommend that researchers, health educators, health professionals, community staff and school personnel be encouraged by the plateau in overweight and obesity prevalence rates and consider new studies examining what factors may have contributed to the increases seen in the 1980s to the 1990s and what contributed to the plateau since the late 1990s.

- I would delete the following paragraph - the study does not investigate the likely impact of prioritization of health promotion resources: "Although childhood and adolescent obesity have been recognised as a major public health concern in many countries for many years, and recent studies highlight the consistently higher prevalence among those from low SES backgrounds, the results of the current literature suggest that public health campaigns and interventions aimed at promoting healthy eating and increased physical activity should focus on those in most need [18, 20]."

- An alternative to the use of the word "handicapped" is suggested - please see http://www.miusa.org/ncde/tools/respect.

- I would delete the following paragraph which is not related to the findings of the study: "Additionally, for those youth who reside in socially and economically disadvantaged, ethnically diverse communities and attend low SES schools, prevention and intervention programs should be designed, implemented and
evaluated. Such interventions appear to be necessary on a social disadvantage platform and should be developed in collaboration with community members and youth in order to avoid unintended stigma, criticism of cultural body ideals and norms and other potentially harmful outcomes."

- Given the new direction of the paper, I would change the abstract from "Recent studies have reported a plateau in childhood and adolescent obesity prevalence worldwide, but in many Westernized countries they are still considered to be high for socially and economically disadvantaged communities" to "The prevalence of obesity is higher in socially and economically disadvantaged communities in most Westernized countries."

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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