Reviewer’s report

Title: Income inequality and alcohol related harm in Australia

Version: 1 Date: 29 July 2008

Reviewer: Esa Lauri Österberg

Reviewer’s report:

Major compulsory revisions

1. Introduction should include a discussion and motivation why the association of income inequality with alcohol caused harm should be studied. According to my understanding there is a large and long-going discussion of the association of income inequality and many ill-health effects. Also the introduction – according to my mind - somehow confuses the effect of income inequality and the effect of lower socioeconomic status.

2. I tried to read the “Methods” very carefully but I am not convinced that the income level is control for. Therefore, one explanation for the result may be that the same level of income inequality includes some LGAs with very high and some LGAs with very low income levels, and the income level may have a greater effect on alcohol-related problems than the income inequality. Why should the above mentioned LGAs be more similar and differ from a LGA with on average medium high income level but higher income inequality.

Minor essential revisions

1. Abstract. ...”alcohol caused harm: acute (primary related to the short term consequences of drinking”). Both death in alcohol poisonings and alcohol related liver cirrhosis are short term consequences when the person passes away but alcohol poisoning is more an outcome of one drinking episode (with no need for previous long term alcohol consumption) whereas dying in liver cirrhosis mortality presupposes long term heavy alcohol consumption. In the next sentence the word “short” is definitely wrong.

2. Introduction, line 6: “Typically” may be too strong word here.

3. According to my mind there are some inconsistencies with

   a. the wording in “Conclusion” of the abstract (“Rates of alcohol-attributable hospitalisation and death are strongly associated with measures of income inequality at a local level in Australia”,

   b. presenting the results on pages 6 and 7, (“Figure 3 highlights not only the fact that no clear relationship was evident ...; However, unlike hospitalisation data shown in Figures 1 and 2, there was no evidence of the concave decrease, ...”,

   and

   c. the first paragraph in “Discussion” (“The nature of the relationship was consistent across acute and chronic alcohol-attributable hospitalisations and was similar for chronic alcohol-attributable deaths;”; “... , there was no evidence of a
relationship between income inequalities and acute alcohol-attributable deaths,..."

**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 interest