Reviewer's report

**Title:** Child Health Partnerships: a critical review of program characteristics, outcomes and their relationship.

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 3 March 2010

**Reviewer:** Neil Wigg

Reviewer's report:

This is a very ambitious paper. The value of the paper lies in the compilation and comparison of policy-driven major Child Health Partnership programs. Unfortunately the scope and comparability of outcome data from the Programs studied are insufficient to draw strong conclusions about the value of partnership approaches in Child Health policy. The authors have focussed attention on health outcome measures to assess the contribution of partnership arrangements. Therefore the conclusions they are able to reach are relatively weak.

The authors may wish to comment on the following (discretionary revision):

This paper does not address a key policy issue of whether or not formal interagency partnerships provide better outcomes than the alternate approach of providing each of those agencies (who would be partners) with additional funds for service delivery. This issue may only be able to be addressed through program indicators, such as measures of access and occasions of service.

Partnerships are proposed to address program shortcomings in Child Health, as one means of addressing the reality that program funding is required in one government agency in order to achieve outcomes in another ie invest in Early Childhood, to achieve Health Outcomes. This can be justified within government by imposing partnership requirements. However the evidence for improved outcomes is needed.

The authors may also wish to comment upon the costs of supporting formal partnerships and whether or not this reduces the available funds for single agency service delivery.

**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 when providing this review.