Reviewer's report

**Title:** Factors associated with reported service use for mental health problems by residents of rural and remote communities: cross-sectional findings from a baseline survey

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 9 October 2012

**Reviewer:** Greg Martin

**Reviewer's report:**

This manuscript reports on the findings of a study of mental health service use in a sample of residents of rural and remote areas. Overall, the paper is interesting and well written, and the study was well conducted. The abstract is appropriate, the aims are clear, the data analytic methods appropriate and adequately described, and the tables are informative. The key measures employed in the study are robust and well validated. The Provisional Service Need model, developed for the study, seems a reasonable proxy for direct measures of met and unmet need for specific professional services. I have some minor comments.

**Major Compulsory Revisions**

n/a

**Minor Essential Revisions**

1. Recruitment, paragraph 1. I found this section somewhat unclear. “The baseline survey used self-report measures administered in two parts (Survey A and B) mailed two weeks apart.” Later in the paragraph it is stated that participants over 65 were screened using a telephone interview, and that non-English speakers and those with a hearing impairment were excluded. Were all participants contacted by telephone to gain consent (and possibly data collection) or only the over 65s? Was some data collected by telephone and some by paper and pencil survey? This should be clarified.

2. Study Limitations, paragraph 1. At 27% the study response rate is low and may limit the interpretation of the findings. This warrants some additional more explicit comment in the limitations section.

**Discretionary Revisions**

3. Background, paragraph 4. The significant increase in mental health service use (other than from GPs), reported by Parslow et al is almost certainly the result of the significant Federal government policy initiatives to improve access to services (i.e. the Access to Allied Psychological Services initiative, and later, the Better Access to Psychiatrists, Psychologists and General Practitioners through the Medicare Benefits Schedule) the occurred between the 1997 and 2007 National Surveys. This may be worth mentioning.
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