Reviewer's report

**Title:** The availability, spatial accessibility, service utilisation and retrieval cost of paediatric intensive care services for children in rural, regional and remote Queensland: study protocol.

**Version:** 2 **Date:** 21 January 2013

**Reviewer:** G Colville

**Reviewer's report:**

Protocol is clearly written and makes use of existing datasets. The central research question about whether or not care is compromised by centralisation of intensive care services v more local provision is an important one.

May be relevant research in Canada which has a similar problem to Australia in terms of scatter of population and distances between intensive care units.

Will the authors look at all at mortality rates? Surely this the most important consideration? If one option is a bit more expensive but doubles survival, then it is important to report this.

It should be acknowledged that the time a retrieval takes will not just be a matter of distance but will include a variable amount of time taken to stabilise the child at the local hospital. This is an important, life-saving aspect of retrieval ie it is more than just a transport service, it is a way of getting specialist expertise to the child, wherever the child is. This factor may need to be controlled for in some way to make proper comparisons.

**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.