Author's response to reviews

Title: A qualitative study of a social and emotional well-being service for a remote Indigenous Australian community: Implications for access, effectiveness, and sustainability.

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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Professor Myfanwy Morgan
Associate Editor
BMC Health Services Research

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Dear Professor Morgan,

RE: Manuscript 2115663887825720

Thank you for your correspondence concerning the review of my manuscript “A qualitative study of a social and emotional wellbeing service for remote Indigenous Australians: Implications for access, effectiveness, and sustainability.” with regard to publication in BMC Health Services Research. I appreciated receiving the reviewers’ suggestions which seemed positive and constructive and I have altered the paper according to their suggestions. I have listed the reviewers’ comments and outlined how I accommodated their suggestions in the attached Response to Reviewers’ Comments document.

In addition to the specific changes recommended by the reviewers I have also reviewed the paper and corrected problems with grammar and general expression.

Given the changes I have made, I hope that the paper is now of a much higher standard which might make it more suitable for publication in BMC Health Services Research. I would be pleased, however, to continue working on the paper if the reviewers feel that further improvements could be made.

Yours sincerely,
Timothy A. Carey PhD
Response to Reviewers’ Comments

Major revisions required:

1. There is some poor choice of language in some parts (particularly in the abstract)-e.g. "should be developed for 'these' people" and the notion that Indigeneity is of itself a 'disadvantage' or implied deficit.
   - Abstract reworded and sentences implying Indigeneity is a disadvantage and referring to “these people” have been removed.

2. It is not clear who, or what body, initiated the evaluation - CADPHC, The SEWEBS itself? It would also be helpful to explain more fully on the rationale for the particular type of intervention and to justify the description of being 'culturally appropriate and meaningful for local cultural groups' 
   - Further explanation for the rationale of the intervention was provided through reference to the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island policy.
   - Clarification regarding the initiation of the evaluation has been provided. The Health Board endorsed and gave permission for the research and this information has been included.
   - Another sentence has been added to justify the description of being culturally appropriate and meaningful for local cultural groups.

3. Some further description of what the intervention involved is required, particularly given what appears to have been the great range of activities comprising an extremely complex intervention.
   - Further clarification around the activities provided has been added. Importantly, information has been added to explain that what is regarded as important in developing effective programs in remote communities are the processes involved not the particular activities that are provided.

3. It is not stated whether either the principal researcher or research assistant conducting the interviews is Indigenous, and should be, along with any implications for access and data quality. Similarly, the number of Indigenous participants interviewed should be stated.
   - It has been clarified that both the principal researcher and research assistant were non Indigenous.
   - The implications for data access have been highlighted in terms of the importance of the initial visits to the community by the principal researcher
   - The number of Indigenous people who were interviewed has been specified.
4. How many people were approached for interview, in relation to the number who agreed? Were the 21 interviewees all of the 'many' who agreed, or was it not possible to interview them all?
   - The recruitment process has been explained in greater detail including the number of people initially contacted in relation to the number who were ultimately interviewed.

5. What questions were asked of the interviewees? Even if these were loosely framed and open-ended it is important to give some indication of how the questions might have influenced the kinds of responses that are reported (qualitative data rarely just 'emerges'!)
   - The topic guides that were used to structure the interviews have been included as an Appendix.

6. The data analysis is described in a somewhat formulaic manner; some brief examples or trails of how an excerpt from a transcript came to be categorised, grouped, summarised and reported would strengthen description of the method of data analysis.
   - The way in which the transcripts were analysed and the themes derived has been expanded with more detailed explanation to strengthen the description of the method of data analysis.

7. It is essential that some distinctions are made between comments from/experiences of service users and those of providers and other stakeholders and to include any areas of disagreement between groups.
   While preserving confidentiality is difficult within a small community and a very small pool of potential participants, it should still be possible to make some of these distinctions clearer, for example by summarising any collective themes or response patterns - e.g. SEWBS workers may have emphasised the demanding nature of work. More problematic is the grouping under 'Program activities' of both service user and worker experiences, while not identifying specific activities (eg counselling)
   - Identifiers have been added to all the quotations so that it is clear as to which groups are making particular statements.
   - Information has been added to indicate that some groups emphasised different aspects of the program more than others.
   - Information has also been added to indicate that, generally, there was no disagreement amongst participants although some participants expressed ideas about the way in which the SEWBS could be improved.

8. The sub-theme 'Results' is confusing and would be better renamed @Program results' as currently the distinction is blurred between results of the SEWBS programs as perceived by the interviewees, and results of/conclusions drawn from the evaluation itself. Perhaps an example or two could also be provided of the 'ways of
evaluating services that might be adopted in urban centres [that] would not be appropriate in the context of a remote Indigenous community.

- The subtheme “Results” has been changed to “Program results”
- Examples have been included to clarify the ways in which evaluating services in remote communities will be different from evaluations in urban centres

9. The Conclusions drawn should be more modest rather than claiming that 'SEWBS has been an effective response to significant community problems' as the data does not absolutely justify such confidence.

- The conclusions have been expressed more modestly and it has been made clearer that what are being reported are the perceptions of the participants of the study. For example, the sentence highlighted by the reviewers has been changed to “These results indicate that the participants of this study feel that the SEWBS has been an effective response to significant community problems.”

10. Referring to the community members themselves as 'remote' is inappropriate. We suggest changing the title to: 'A qualitative study of a social and emotional well-being service for a remote Indigenous Australian community: Implications for access, effectiveness, and sustainability.'

- The title has been changed according to the reviewers’ suggestion.

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Please make the following formatting changes during revision of your manuscript. Ensuring that the manuscript meets the journal’s manuscript structure will help to speed the production process if your manuscript is accepted for publication.

1. Copyediting

After reading through your manuscript, we feel that the quality of written English needs to be improved before the manuscript can be considered further.

We advise you to seek the assistance of a fluent English speaking colleague, or to have a professional editing service correct your language. Please ensure that particular attention is paid to the abstract.

- A fluent English speaking colleague has proofread the manuscript. It should be noted that the author is a fluent English speaker, in fact English is his only language. Moreover he has in excess of 100 publications including books, book chapters, and peer-reviewed journal articles and this is the first time that reviewers of any journal have suggested that the assistance of a fluent English speaker be sought.

2. Authors' Contributions
Please place the Authors' Contributions section after Competing interests. Please check the instructions for authors on the journal website for the correct format to use for Authors' Contributions.

- The instructions on the website have been checked and the Authors’ contributions have been placed after the Competing Interests section.