Reviewer's report

Title: Australia's increasing reliance on foreign-born health workers

Version: 3 Date: 31 May 2013

Reviewer: Gilles Dussault

Reviewer's report:

This paper has already been reviewed and the a. have responded to two minor requests for change, which they have addressed. However, I think that the paper is not ready for publication and that additional changes are needed as a number of points remain unclear.

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1- the title is not justified by the text and the data presented. To say that Australia is increasingly relying on foreign-born health workers is to imply dependency on migrant health workers, whereas an unknown proportion of these foreign-born may be Australian citizens who have trained in Australia.

2- Methods, §3: Does "year of arrival" correspond to arrival of already qualified professionals? For instance, a foreigner could have arrived in 2001 and then trained as a nurse or a physician. in that case, that person cannot be counted as a loss to the country of origin

3- Why census data were prefered to Registration data? what are the strengths and weaknesses of both sets of data?

4- Why not use the same Country/Region of birth in Tables 1, 2 a and b? In Tables 1 and 2b, New Zealand is included, but not in 2b. Should not South Africa also be singled out?

5- Rural/urban: does the information from the census refer to where the respondent lives or where he/she works?

6- Costs implications: why not cover nurses?

7- Discussion: Explain the statement " A somewhat surprising finding ...".

8- Discuss the discrepancies between census and Boards' data and the implications for the conclusions of the paper.

9- Discussion: a missing piece is whether there is active recruitment abroad and to what extent the Commonwealth and the Global Codes are respected.

10- Conclusion: The a. should expand on the issue of reimbursement which is regularly raised: What are the pros and cons?

Minor Essential Revisions:

1- the a. should be consistent in their terminology to refer to medical practitioners; they should use one term (" medical practitioners", "doctors", or "physicians") all along. I also suggest to avoid using "developed" and
"developing country" and rather use low-middle-high income country.
2- in the Abstract, the a. mention savings of 1.6 billion (presumably Australian dollars) and 1.7 in the text. Please clarify and give an equivalent in USD.
3- Background, § 2; a verb is missing in the 2nd sentence
4-Methods: end of §1; no need to repeat 2011
5-Results, Table 1: add % to last two lines
6-Section on data by country of origin: give figures for all countries
7-Table 3a, 4th col.: and year???
8-Discussion, §3, last sentence "...foreign-born doctors in OECD countries .." (OECD is an organization, not a region.
9- Conclusion: OECD includes 34 countries
10- I suggest to give a link to official documents to facilitate access
11- Ref. 11 is incomplete

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**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