Reviewer's report

**Title:** Rural Health Professionals Program - what can we learn about recruitment and distribution of nurses and allied health professionals in rural and remote Australia?

**Version:** 1 **Date:** 8 October 2013

**Reviewer:** Susan Nancarrow

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This is a well written paper that provides some useful information.

Minor essential revisions:
1. Title could better reflect more detail of the study such as suggest that this involves analysis of empirical data relating to an intervention. Something like early learning from an intervention designed to improve rural recruitment and retention?
2. Abstract: Data ‘were’ not data ‘was’
3. Background: More information about the RHPP would be useful – how many staff, total cost of running it (if appropriate). This is the type of information that enables others to use the results. For instance, a great deal of information is provided in Table 8 that could be described here (or elsewhere).
4. Results: Demographics should be presented before professions (or perhaps as part of professions).
5. There are a lot of tables, and quite a lot of information presented. Could you cluster a lot of the related information together in fewer tables? Eg, average age of RHPP recruits doesn’t need it’s own graph (fig 3). Could age be added as another row to Table 3, and table renamed “respondent details”?
6. Table 7 should precede table 6.

Major essential revisions:
1. There is no mention of the ethics of the data handling. Did the participants know their data would be used in this evaluation? Has ethics approval been obtained? Some acknowledgement of the ethics of the data handling should be made (even if it is to say that this was routinely collected data, so no ethics approval was obtained / required – although participants should normally approve use of their data in this way).
2. Table 3 covers the same info as table 2 – remove table 2.

Discretionary revisions
1. This relevant paper has been recently published, and the authors may want to reference it as it supports several of the interventions / findings presented here; Interventions for supporting nurse retention in rural and remote areas: an umbrella review, Gisèle Mbemba1, Marie-Pierre Gagnon1*, Guy Paré2 and José
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 I have no competing interests.