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: 11 October 2013

Reviewer: Deborah Schofield

Reviewer's report:

The paper reviews an interesting new program to attract health professionals to rural areas in Australia. It is a worthwhile topic but there are some issues that would need to be addressed for publication.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. It is not clear what the question is - this should be clearer in the title, abstract, introduction and conclusions. It appears to be an assessment of whether the program was successful or not based on the first paragraph of the discussion.

2. The indications in the paper of 96% recruits retained looks very promising, but it isn't clear if this is better or not than without the program over the timeframe reported, or whether the difference is statistically significant given the sample size and characteristics. There needs to be an appropriate research design (eg before and after study or comparing similar regions with and without the program) to answer the question and criterion on which to measure success.

3. Analysis in Excel. At the moment it is really just a descriptive analysis but needs a statistical analysis which probably requires a statistical package to undertake. The study needs to be reviewed by a statistician who can advise.

4. The descriptive statistics about program participants would be better briefer and in one table with more emphasis on assessment of the success of the program

Minor Revisions

1. The section on the program would be better in the background to give a clearer sense of purpose of the paper. The Program design and delivery section could move to methods

2. The variables presented in methods would be better in a table.

3. The results section strays into discussion of results eg top of p 11 and page 12 - these instances should be moved to the discussion section

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.

Declaration of competing interests:

No competing interests