Reviewer's report

**Title:** A systematic review of studies evaluating Australian Indigenous community development projects: the extent of community participation, their methodological quality and their outcomes

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 10 August 2015

**Reviewer:** Kenneth McLeroy

**Reviewer's report:**

This is an excellent systematic review on studies (1990-2015) of the extent of community participation in community development projects (n=31) implemented in Australian indigenous communities, and includes critical appraisals of their qualitative and quantitative methods. Strengths of this report include:

1. Detailed information on the search terms used, database searched, and an appropriately detailed PRISMA diagram.
2. Search routines that included searches of the grey literature, reference lists, and information from colleagues.
3. Use of appropriate criteria, scales, and multiple reviewers for assessing the extent of community participation and the quality of both quantitative and qualitative studies.
4. Assessment of reviewer consistency in assessing study quality.
5. Conclusions are linked to the data.

There are, however, a few, relatively minor areas, that should be addressed by the authors. First, they should explain why they chose the time period covered in the review (1990-2015).

Second, it would have been helpful if the authors had provided some comparative information on the articles published in the professional literature and the grey literature included. Perhaps they did this and I just missed it.

Third, I am surprised that the authors did not raise the issue of reporting standards as one way of beginning to address the problems in research reporting in this area. I would strongly encourage them to take a look as the EQUATOR network on reporting standards (http://www.equator-network.org/), as well as the recent Transparency and Openness Promotion guidelines recently published in Science.

Fourth, I think it would have been helpful if the authors had devoted a bit more effort to comparing their data on indigenous community development projects in Australia with the findings on related community development efforts elsewhere.

**Level of interest:** An exceptional article
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 interest.