

25<sup>th</sup> April 2014

Our Ref: JS/lw

**By Email: [committee.justice@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:committee.justice@niassembly.gov.uk)**

The Committee Clerk,  
Room 242,  
Parliament Buildings,  
Ballymiscaw,  
Stormont,  
Belfast BT4 3XX.

Dear Ms Darrah,

**RE: LEGAL AID AND CORONER'S COURT BILL**

Thank you for your letter of 04<sup>th</sup> April 2014. I have discussed the proposal from the Attorney-General that the Bill should be amended to confer a power on the Attorney-General to require access to documents to enable him to exercise his power under Section 14(1) of the Coroners Act(Northern Ireland) 1959 with the Chief Legal Advisor in the Directorate of Legal Services.

In principle we consider that, where the Coroner has decided not to hold an Inquest, it would be necessary for the Attorney-General to have access to relevant information in order for him to reach an informed decision as to whether to direct an Inquest in a particular case. It would be important that the legislation clearly sets out what information the Attorney-General is entitled to access.

However, if the Attorney-General were to exercise the power to request information while the death is still under investigation by the Coroner and a decision to hold an Inquest has not yet been taken by the Coroner, we would be concerned about duplication of processes and the consequent impact on resources.

Kind regards



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**Dr J Simpson**  
**Medical Director**

Cc: Mairead McAlinden, Chief Executive  
Karen Wasson, Acting Litigation Manager