

Mr Brian Patterson
Coroners Unit
Ministry of Justice
8th Floor
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7 January 2009

Dear Brian

Deaths at Gosport War Memorial Hospital:

Andrew Bradley has forwarded to me a copy of his letter dated 6 January 2009.

For my own part, I wholly endorse what he says to you regarding this matter. When I initially made representations to the Ministry of Justice in 2007 about the scale of Inquests in relation to the Gosport deaths, I was concerned principally about the resource implications of holding up to 92 Inquests. Since then, as Andrew has proceeded with the 10 cases in which I opened Inquests it has become apparent that the Inquest process is not going to deliver the sort of investigations and conclusions which are envisaged by the families involved. It is also not clear what the other 82 families are expecting to happen as regards their relatives' deaths.

At the meeting held at the Ministry of Justice in August 2007, you will recall that I raised the possibility that a public inquiry could be held into all 92 deaths rather than a number of Inquests as being a more appropriate way of allaying public concerns regarding the deaths. I was told by the representative from the Department of Health that a public inquiry would not be an option because the Department considered that the Gosport deaths did not raise any issues of national concern. I pointed out that although the two situations were not entirely parallel, in the public mind what happened at the hospital in Gosport would be linked with the Shipman case and there was a nationally important issue involved, namely the administration of morphine – possibly unnecessarily – in a NHS hospital. The representative from the Department of Health rejected this.

As events have panned out, I consider that a public inquiry into all the deaths is needed to allay public concerns about what happened and will do so in a way which the limited scope of the Inquest could never do so.

Hence, I would ask that the question of a public inquiry into what happened at Gosport War Memorial Hospital be reconsidered as a matter of urgency.

Yours sincerely

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cc Mr A M Bradley