

Witness Name: William Wright

Statement No.: WITN2287019

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Dated: 15th April 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

EXHIBIT WITN2287067

T: **GRO-C** F: **GRO-C**
E: mark.dorrian@ **GRO-C**

Mr Bill Wright

GRO-C

Our ref: 2008/0046480OR
17 December 2008

Dear Mr Wright

Thank you for your letter of 21 November 2008 to Nicola Sturgeon, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, where you urge Ms Sturgeon to make a public statement on the progress of the public inquiry into Hepatitis C/HIV acquired infection from NHS treatment with blood and blood products prior to 1991.

As you mention, Ms Sturgeon announced the Public Inquiry in the Scottish Parliament on 23 April 2008. Since the Inquiry was announced, Lady Cosgrove, who was to chair the Inquiry, has indicated that, for personal and family reasons and with much regret, she no longer felt able to accept the appointment as Chair of the Inquiry. This was conveyed in writing to Christine Graham MSP, Convenor of the Health and Sport Committee by letter on 25 September 2008. Ms Sturgeon has thanked Lady Cosgrove for the substantial and valuable work she has done to prepare and lay the foundations of the Inquiry. Urgent consideration is currently being given to the appointment of a new Chair.

Unfortunately, there has been some delay in formally setting up the Inquiry owing to the withdrawal of Lady Cosgrove. However, the key staffing and accommodation arrangements are in place. The Inquiry Team is almost complete and has been provided with office accommodation and IT facilities at the offices of the Legal Aid Board at Drumsheugh Gardens in Edinburgh. The delay has not been caused by budgetary issues although the scope of the Inquiry, as defined by the terms of reference, do have to be agreed by the replacement Chair.

The announcement to Parliament on 23 April 2008 that the Scottish Government would hold a public inquiry acknowledged that those affected had campaigned long and hard for a public inquiry. It remains Ms Sturgeon's intention that a thorough inquiry under section 28 of the Inquiries Act should get to the bottom of what happened.

The Scottish Inquiry is not waiting for the findings of the Archer Inquiry to be published before beginning. It is the case that the minutes of meetings between officials and the St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
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Patient Group Forum to discuss various aspects of the Inquiry are indeed confidential. This is because these meetings were carried out with the understanding from the outset and agreement of all present, that the discussions were confidential. Officials need to deliberate issues and communicate a frank and open exchange of views with stakeholders without inhibition in order to perform their functions properly. Knowing that the discussions would be made public would have had a substantially inhibiting effect on the meetings and damage the quality of future meetings.

Ms Sturgeon is aware that the delay in setting up the Inquiry may be stressful to those affected and their families. Ms Sturgeon will announce the formal establishment of the inquiry in the Scottish Parliament as soon as a replacement Chair has been found and officials are working to ensure that the Inquiry can get up and running as soon as a new Chair is appointed.

I hope this reply is helpful.

GRO-C

Mark Dorrian