



Attorney General
for Northern Ireland

Mr Jim Allister MLA
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Our Ref: AGNI/11/185

Your Ref: JA/JA/General/5888

Date: May 22 2013

Dear Jim

Re: Civil Service (Special Advisers) Bill

Thank you for your letter of 21 May.

I expressed some concerns to the DFP Committee when I spoke about the Bill as first introduced - particularly in the context of Article 7 ECHR. I see from the further consideration debates and from some comments in the press that it may be thought that those concerns still exist. It is important, therefore, that my views on the Bill in its present form are clearly understood.

As a result of amendments made during its passage and in particular the existence of an appeal mechanism which breaks the inevitable and fixed link between an historic conviction and an adverse consequence for employment I am content that the Bill in its present form would be within the legislative competence of the Assembly.

You will appreciate that my views on competence are not to be construed as a statement on whether or not the Bill is, in policy terms, a good idea or not. This is, of course, the central issue which is properly a matter for the Assembly.

I am happy for this letter to be shared with other MLAs.

Yours sincerely

John F Larkin QC
Attorney General for Northern Ireland