

**Jason Schubert**

**From:** Ainslie Kirkegaard  
**Sent:** Monday, 20 May 2013 3:26 PM  
**To:** Michael Barnes  
**Subject:** Stillbirths info as requested  
**Sensitivity:** Confidential  
**Attachments:** Stillbirth data; Inquiry into Stillbirths[1].pdf

Here you go.

The SA Parliamentary Inquiry recommendation was to amend their Coroners Act to allow investigation of "stillbirths of unexpected, unnatural, unusual, violent or unknown cause" - a nice concrete concept...

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**From:** Ainslie Kirkegaard  
**Sent:** Friday, 8 March 2013 2:23 PM  
**To:** Michael Barnes  
**Subject:** RE: Extended Coronial jurisdiction  
**Sensitivity:** Confidential

The data came from a confidential draft of the 2013 QMPQC report - it is all stillbirths per annum, irrespective of cause - antepartum or peripartum - my initial email attached.

The stillbirth data does not drill down to the gestational age of the foetus but it does categorise by cause eg only 1.5% were known hypoxic peripartum deaths (n= 19 over 2009-2011) but I would need some expert guidance from Prof Humphrey about the extent to which the other listed causes might coincide with [redacted] gestational cut off of 37 weeks. You would have to expect there would be some within the categories of perinatal infection, hypertension, maternal conditions, specific perinatal conditions etc.

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**From:** Michael Barnes  
**Sent:** Friday, March 08, 2013 12:14 PM  
**To:** Ainslie Kirkegaard  
**Subject:** FW: Extended Coronial jurisdiction  
**Sensitivity:** Confidential

did I ask you to explain how we arrived at our estimate of the numbers? if not, can you tell me anyway?

m

Michael Barnes  
 State Coroner  
 Queensland  
 GPO Box 1649, Brisbane, Q. 4001  
 07 38980360

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**From:** [redacted]

**Sent:** Monday, 4 March 2013 10:10 PM  
**To:** Michael Barnes  
**Subject:** RE: Extended Coronial jurisdiction  
**Sensitivity:** Confidential

Hi Michael,

Thank you for that. Just to explain the \$0, I was working off a number of extra investigations of between 0-10 deaths during labour > 37 weeks gestation, which was roughly estimated from the limited available data.

An upper threshold of 300 gives me a much better idea of potential cost. Would I be able to ask what the parameters of the Coroner's Office estimate to reach this 300 were? Were they the same as in SA, i.e. all stillbirths (not only during labour) >28 weeks gestation?

Thanks again,

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**From:** Michael Barnes [mailto:Magistrate.Barnes@courts.qld.gov.au]  
**Sent:** Monday, 4 March 2013 7:02 PM  
**To:**   
**Subject:** RE: Extended Coronial jurisdiction  
**Sensitivity:** Confidential

Thank you

As advised previously, I agree in principle with your proposal but as you are aware the necessary amendments are a matter for government. If the government is persuaded the change should be made, the only other stumbling block would be cost. We estimate the amendment is likely to result in approximately 300 extra investigations per year. To give you some idea of how much work that involves, a full-time coroner's workload is 600 - 650 cases.

So, as you can appreciate, we could not take on the extra work the expanded jurisdiction would generate unless the government were also inclined to make the necessary adjustment to our budget. That is of course, also a matter for the government.

kind regards, Michael

Michael Barnes  
State Coroner  
Queensland  
GPO Box 1649, Brisbane, Q. 4001  
07 38980360

NP\_49-Sch4

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**From:**   
**Sent:** Monday, 4 March 2013 11:14 AM  
**To:** Michael Barnes  
**Subject:** Extended Coronial jurisdiction  
**Sensitivity:** Confidential

Dear Coroner Barnes,

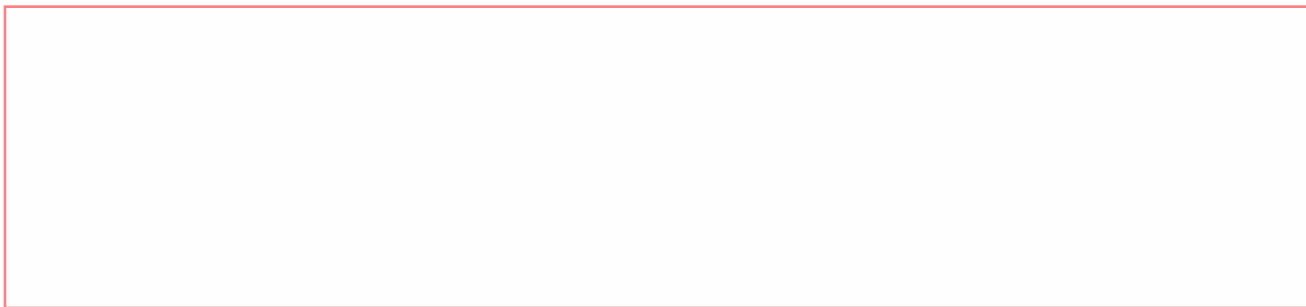
**RE: Extended jurisdiction over intrapartum deaths**

As foreshadowed, I recently met with the Attorney General, the Director General (Justice) and the Director General (Health) to discuss amendment to the Coroner's Act.

Please find **attached** for your information the 4-slide Powerpoint presentation that I provided to each of them, illustrating the existing situation versus the situation following amendment.

I look forward to your support in this matter.

Kind regards



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## Jason Schubert

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**From:** Ainslie Kirkegaard  
**Sent:** Thursday, 21 February 2013 12:22 PM  
**To:** Brigita White  
**Cc:** Michael Barnes  
**Subject:** Stillbirth data

Hi Brigita.

Prof Humphrey has very kindly given me the following (surprisingly high) stillbirth data from the yet-to-be-completed QMPQC report for 2009-2011:

- Total no. stillbirths per annum in Qld - 400 in 2011 (down from 447 in 2009 and 413 in 2010)
- principal causes of stillbirths were unexplained antepartum death (30.6%) and congenital abnormality (25%)
- other causes quantified include perinatal infection (2.9%), hypertension (2.8%), antepartum haemorrhage (6%), maternal conditions (1.7%), specific perinatal conditions (8.3%), hypoxic peripartum deaths (1.5%), fetal growth restriction (4.8%), spontaneous pre-term (13.9%) and no obstetric antecedent (2.6%)
- there continue to be low autopsy rates for stillbirths (36.9% in 2011)

One has to question how easy it would be in practice to single out those stillbirths that fall neatly within the SA Inquiry recommendation of "*stillbirths of unexpected, unnatural, unusual, violent or unknown cause*" for coronial investigation - in my view, issues like access to and quality of antenatal and obstetric care could easily feature in the management of pregnancies which fail because of most of the causes identified above.

Let me know if you need anything further.  
AK

Ainslie Kirkegaard  
Registrar  
Office of the State Coroner  
Department of Justice and Attorney-General  
Ph: 310 99698  
Fax: 3239 0176



The Hon Jarrod Bleijie MP  
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice

In reply please quote: 548628/1

Mr Michael Barnes  
State Coroner  
The Office of State Coroner  
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Dear Mr Barnes

I believe there could be some merit in increasing the coronial jurisdiction under the *Coroners Act 2003* (the Act) to include investigations of stillbirths that occur during labour, to ensure there is a robust oversight system to assist in the prevention of these types of stillbirths.

I am currently considering options for reform. Enclosed is a short issues paper on the current legislative context, current review mechanisms, the approach in other jurisdictions and possible options in relation to this policy matter.

Your views are sought on this matter, including:

1. the merits of expanding the jurisdiction of the Act to include the investigation of stillbirths that occur during labour;
2. if you do agree with expanding the Act to include the investigation of stillbirths that occur during labour, any limits or other criteria that you think should be applied;
3. if you do not agree that the Act be expanded to include the investigation of stillbirths that occur during labour, whether and how existing review mechanisms could be improved; and
4. any funding implications that may result from expanding the jurisdiction.

I have also sent this paper to the Honourable Campbell Newman MP, Premier, the Honourable Lawrence Springborg MP, Minister for Health and the Honourable Jack Dempsey MP, Minister for Police and Community Safety, to ascertain their views before consulting more broadly on this issue.

I would be grateful if you could provide any comments to Ms Amber Manwaring, Senior Legal Officer, Strategic Policy, Department of Justice and Attorney-General at [amber.manwaring@justice.qld.gov.au](mailto:amber.manwaring@justice.qld.gov.au) or on 3239 0394 by 26 July 2013.

Yours sincerely

  
JARROD BLEIJIE MP  
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice

Enc.