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17<sup>th</sup> June 2013

To all Panel Counsel,

**“TRANSFORMING LEGAL AID” CONSULTATION**

A number of you wrote to me on 4<sup>th</sup> June drawing to my attention concerns about the Ministry of Justice proposals for the reform of legal aid. From regular attendance at Bar Council meetings I am well aware of the deeply and sincerely held concerns the Bar has on the effect these proposals, if implemented, will have. I recognise that those concerns go well beyond the personal, financial implications to individual members of the Bar – serious though those may be – but extend to the potential impact on the quality of the justice system this country is rightly proud of.

The Consultation paper meeting was one of the main topics for consideration at the Bar Council meeting of 20<sup>th</sup> April. I was asked to speak at the close of the Council's debate. I emphasised that this was a consultation exercise carried out by the Lord Chancellor. He, like other Ministers, had savings that his department had to absorb and where savings are to be made depends on where priorities lay. I said that on the whole, the service provided by the legal profession is taken for granted and that there was a general view that whilst lawyers complained about every financial cut imposed, the edifice will continue to function as it has in the past. I said that it was apparent now, from listening to what had been said at the meeting, that many present took the view that these proposals would cause the edifice to collapse. In my view, it was vital that the Bar use the consultation exercise to explain why these proposals will damage the justice system and what the overall impact will be.

I know that the Bar Council has provided a thoughtful yet powerful response to the consultation – one of many from the Bar. It was important that the consultation was responded to and I am grateful to all who have taken time to write to me and provide me with the particular insights of those who carry out Government work through membership of the Panels.

Policy in this area is owned by the Lord Chancellor and not me. But I have already spoken to the Lord Chancellor and will continue to draw to his attention the concerns that have been expressed to me. I will endeavour to ensure, as far as I can, that the decision he reaches in due course is a fully informed one.

*Yours sincerely*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dominic Grieve', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**RT HON DOMINIC GRIEVE QC**