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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**LEGAL AID SOUTH AFRICA PROVES THAT QUALITY LEGAL REPRESENTATION IS NOT ONLY FOR THE RICH**

Legal Aid South Africa continues to demonstrate its commitment to providing the poor and vulnerable with quality legal services, which includes the appointment of expert witnesses. In a matter being heard at the Bloemfontein High Court this week and next, a DNA expert has been appointed by Legal Aid SA to ensure the best possible representation for our client, Mr Jeremia Ramotibe.

We are on record as the legal representative of Mr Ramotibe, who has been charged with the murder of the deceased Ms Tatum Nel. Our client is represented by Judicare Advocate Jan Nkhahle instructed by Legal Aid SA's Bloemfontein Justice Centre.

Mr Ramotibe is standing trial from 25 July to 5 August 2016 at the Bloemfontein High Court. He is currently in custody and on trial for allegedly killing Ms Nel on 27 September 2013. Our client was linked to the murder by his alleged confession and a bloodstain found on his t-shirt by the police. The matter was moved from the Bloemfontein Magistrate's Court and referred to the High Court due to its complex nature.

Legal Aid SA has appointed DNA expert Dr Antonel Olckers to testify in this matter. She is the CEO of DNAbiotec® and will be testifying as an expert witness on the scientific validity of the evidence submitted to the Court. Dr Olckers contributes her significant expertise to the cross-examination of the Forensic Analysts from the SAPS Forensic Science Laboratory. Their DNA analysis of the bloodstain found on our client's t-shirt is being contested.

Legal Aid SA's Chief Legal Executive, Mr Patrick Hundermark, says "The appointment of Dr Olckers demonstrates Legal Aid SA's ongoing commitment to ensuring that the poor also receive quality legal assistance, including the appointment of experts where this is required for a competent defence. It is often heralded that the appointment of experts is the preserve of the rich which we as Legal Aid SA need to categorically dispel. We have

standard operating procedures and budgets in place to ensure the appointment of experts where same is found to be legally necessary for a competent defence. We also continually train our legal practitioners in the various expert sciences such as DNA, medical forensics, finger and palm prints, ballistics and questioned documents to ensure quality legal representation for our clients”.

This matter highlights our mandate as set out in the Legal Aid South Africa Act (39 of 2014) and Section 35 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, which impels us to ensure that every person who is arrested, detained or accused has a right to a fair trial, which further includes the right to have a legal practitioner assigned by the State. Legal Aid SA upholds the notion of being presumed innocent until found guilty by a competent court of law.

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**Issued by the Communication Department of Legal Aid South Africa. For more information, please contact the Acting Communication Executive and National Spokesperson Janeske Botes on 011 877 2153/082 569 3653 or Free State North West Regional Communication Practitioner Thabo Koole on 051 412 8050/078 551 5954**

Visit our website at [www.legal-aid.co.za](http://www.legal-aid.co.za) or call the Legal Aid Advice Line on 0800 110 110

**Please be reminded that the name of our organisation [Legal Aid South Africa](#) is correctly abbreviated as [Legal Aid SA](#) and not as LASA. We respectfully request that you use the correct abbreviation [Legal Aid SA](#) which is representative of our mission to deliver quality [legal aid](#) services to the poor and vulnerable in South Africa.**