

Collaery awaits decision on case delay

Rebecca Gredley, AAP. 26 November 2019

A Canberra lawyer accused of revealing information about Australia bugging East Timor's cabinet rooms will soon find out if his case has been delayed.

Bernard Collaery is fighting the charges, while the former spy-turned-whistleblower he once represented, known only as Witness K, plans to plead guilty.

Collaery will find out on Wednesday morning at the ACT Supreme Court if the attorney-general's attempt to delay hearings slated for next month has been successful.

Lawyers representing the attorney-general told the court on Tuesday more time was needed to respond to evidence from Collaery's legal team because of their sensitive nature.

Some of the evidence was from former senior Australian government officials and former East Timor leaders, the court was told.

But Collaery's lawyers dismissed those concerns, saying the attorney-general should have realised that would be the nature of their evidence.

Lawyers for both sides confirmed to Justice David Mossop the biggest point of contention in the case is whether parts of it will be kept secret.

The case was originally set for three days of hearings in December ahead of a possible trial in March.

Supporters of Collaery and Witness K stood outside court on Tuesday calling for greater protections for whistleblowers, before sitting in on the hearing.

The pair's cases are being dealt with separately, with Witness K expected to be sentenced at the ACT Magistrates Court at a later date.

The bugging of East Timor's cabinet rooms in 2004 occurred during negotiations over a gas and oil treaty.