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Major case against former top public servant heads to High Court



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The High Court of Australia is hearing the Queensland integrity watchdog's appeal in its fight to have a report about one of its corruption investigations made public.

Photo: NCA Newswire/Gary Ramage

Queensland's corruption watchdog is arguing in the High Court of Australia that it should be able to publicly detail allegations involving the state's former public trustee, Peter Carne.

The Crime and Corruption Commission's appeal against a Queensland Court of Appeal decision to block the release of a report into alleged misconduct by Mr Carne during his public service began on Tuesday.

The High Court in December granted the CCC special leave to appeal against the Queensland Court of Appeal's ruling, with a decision expected as early as Wednesday after two days of hearings before five justices in Canberra.

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The potentially precedent-setting case centres on the CCC's lengthy battle to make public the report detailing the accusations against Mr Carne, while the former top bureaucrat has been fighting to keep the document secret.

The CCC investigated Mr Carne from 2018 to 2020 after receiving a complaint that made allegations of corrupt conduct against him, including improper use of Public Trustee Office resources.

The CCC didn't pursue any criminal charges against Mr Carne before he resigned as public trustee later in 2020.

He served in the role – which involves holding powers of attorney over Queensland residents who can't manage their own affairs, as well as managing deceased estates – from 2009 to 2014 and again from 2016 until he quit.



Peter Carne, Queensland's former public trustee, wants the report to be kept secret.

In 2021, the Queensland Supreme Court ruled the report detailing the accusations against Mr Carne could be made public through a parliamentary process.

Mr Carne challenged the decision in the Court of Appeal last year.

Two of the three Queensland justices in the matter allowed his appeal, blocking the release of the report and prompting

