

Factual outline

- In 2016, allegations were made against Cardinal George Pell in relation to historical cases of child sexual abuse.
- In June 2017, charges were laid against the Cardinal and on 1 May 2018, he was committed to stand trial over some of those charges.
- Given the allegations related to two separate incidents, time periods and locations, the judge determined that the matters should be heard as two separate trials.
- In other Australian states, including in NSW, a high-profile figure who is subject to criminal charges and where there has been extensive media coverage can be tried by a judge alone, rather than a jury. This option is not available in Victoria.
- At the recommendation of the prosecutors, and in an attempt to ensure that a potential jury was not influenced or prejudiced by media coverage of the case, the judge put a suppression order in place, preventing any reporting of any details of the charges or the trial proceedings until after the verdict in the second trial had been delivered.
- On 26 February 2019, it was decided that the second set of charges against the Cardinal would be withdrawn, and the trial related to them would not proceed. This meant that the suppression order was removed, and media were free to report the details of the first set of allegations and the verdict.
- Because of this, we now know that on 11 December 2018, a jury found Cardinal Pell guilty of 5 charges of serious sexual assault of one choir boy in late 1996.
- This was the second trial that was held in relation to these allegations. In the first trial, which was held in August 2018, the jury was unable to reach a verdict and so they were dismissed, and the case was heard again in November with a new jury that ultimately found him guilty.
- Cardinal Pell will be sentenced following a plea hearing on 27 February.
- The Cardinal has always maintained his innocence and has lodged an appeal against the guilty verdict.
- His appeal will not be heard by a jury, but by a panel of three judges. There is no date set for the appeal.
- This means that the case is still ongoing, and will not be completed until the appeal is heard and a decision reached. For this reason, we need to respect the continuing process.