



Witness wants 'harm statement' in spy case



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A former spy who blew the whistle on an East Timor bugging scandal is waiting to learn what harm he is supposed to have caused before finalising his guilty plea in court.

The former intelligence officer, known only as Witness K, had been poised to plead guilty to conspiring to share secret information with the East Timorese government in relation to the 2004 diplomatic scandal.

But his lawyer Haydn Carmichael told the ACT Magistrates Court on Tuesday he wanted to see the prosecution's "harm statement" because it could be used to inform sentencing.

Prosecutors agreed to hand over the statement to Witness K's legal team before the matter returns to court on November 15.

Acting chief magistrate Glenn Theakston also made interim orders about the handling of sensitive information relating to national security.

The federal attorney-general will have to provide evidence to prove why the orders are needed.

Witness K was a key witness for East Timor in a case against Australia over allegations Dili's cabinet rooms were bugged during negotiations over a gas and oil treaty.

Ernst Wilhelm also applied to be given leave to join the case as a friend of the court to make a submission about open justice.

His application was also adjourned until the next court date in November.

Witness K's case has been split from his former lawyer Bernard Collaery, who is fighting charges over his role in the affair.

The Human Rights Law Centre on Monday called for charges against the pair to be dropped, arguing Witness K should be protected, not prosecuted, by the government.

East Timor dropped the spying case against Australia in 2017 as an act of goodwill before signing a new resources treaty.

Attorney-General Christian Porter has given the green light for the prosecutions.

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