Case Citations

Case citations are intended to help readers to identify the exact case and the law report series that the case is published in, or the court that the judgment was decided in.

A case that is published in a law report series is referred to as a reported case or decision and will have a ‘Reported Case Citation’.

A case that is not published in a law report series is referred to as an unreported decision or judgment and will have a ‘Medium Neutral Citation’. A medium neutral citation is a “citation system that does not depend on publisher or medium” (Australian Guide to Legal Research, 3rd ed.) This method was introduced by the High Court of Australia in the 1990s to accommodate the citation of judgments when they are first made available online.

In time, an unreported judgment may become published in a law report series and subsequently have a reported case citation as well as its original medium neutral citation.
Case Citations

A full reported citation contains:

• The names of the parties
• The year of the decision
• The volume number of the relevant law report series
• The abbreviated title of the law report series
• The first page of the published case

A medium neutral citation contains:

• The names of the parties
• The year of the decision
• The abbreviation of the court
• The unique judgment number (assigned by the court)
Breen v Williams (1992) 186 CLR 71
Case Citation (Medium Neutral Citation)

Brady v Barber [2016] QCA 053
Parallel or Alternative Citations

Cases may have more than one citation. These multiple citations are known as parallel or alternative citations.

*Breen v Williams* has been published in the authorised reports of the High Court of Australia – the Commonwealth Law Reports - as well as in other law report series. These are alternative or parallel citations.

This case citator record also includes the medium neutral citation assigned to it by the court.

*Bradley v Barber* has not been reported. Its citation is a medium neutral citation.

You may need to interpret any one of these law report series or abbreviations.

Use a legal abbreviations guide to do this!

Find these on the Law Guide.
Legal Abbreviations Guides

Some law databases provide abbreviation guides to assist you in identifying the abbreviation in a citation.

As well as individual database guides, there are a number of useful online guides or indexes available.

You can locate legal abbreviation guides via the library’s Law Guide.