

# Case backed by Jack Dorsey seeks court ruling on bitcoin founder's identity

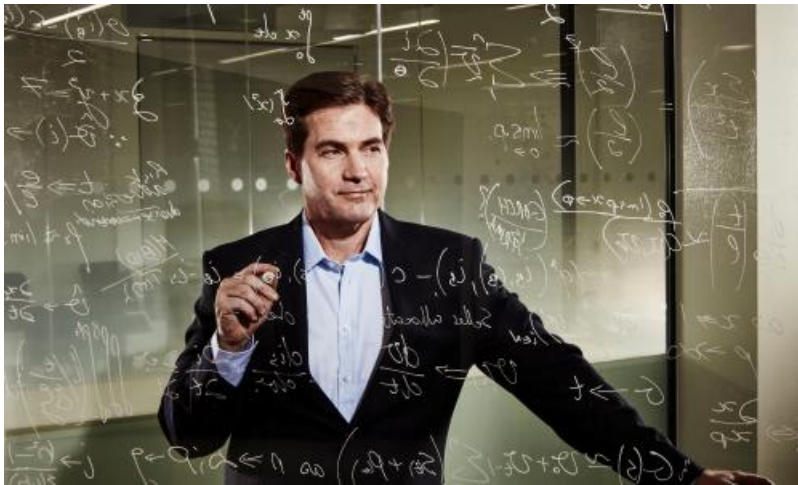
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An Australian computer scientist's claim to be the mythical figure behind bitcoin will be challenged in the UK on Monday, in a high court case backed by the Twitter co-founder Jack Dorsey. Craig Wright has asserted for years that he is the real Satoshi Nakamoto, the pseudonymous author of the 2008 white paper behind the world's cornerstone cryptocurrency, but has failed to prove it. The 53-year-old's claims to be the founding father of bitcoin, and widespread scepticism about these within the crypto community, have led to a number of legal clashes over the years. The latest features the Crypto Open Patent Alliance (Copa), an organisation whose members include Dorsey's payment company, Block, and the cryptocurrency exchange Coinbase. It is asking the high court in London for a ruling, or "negative declaration", that Wright is not Nakamoto. Copa says a ruling in its favour would stop the Australian challenging people who are seeking to develop bitcoin-related projects. A Copa spokesperson said the trial, which is expected to last a month, would "conclusively show that Dr Wright is not Satoshi Nakamoto and will not be able to continue to threaten developers". The trial will be heard at the high court's business and property courts of England and Wales. Last month, Wright offered to settle the case, a move rejected by Copa. The settlement offer included inviting the involved parties to make a donation to a church in Australia and his critics ceasing "any media campaign(s) against me". It also required unnamed entities ceasing to claim that they represent the original bitcoin "as envisioned by me as Satoshi Nakamoto". "I believe the settlement terms are broadly uncontroversial, beneficial to the industry as a whole, and intended to draw a fresh start in the history of bitcoin to guarantee its success in whatever form it takes," Wright wrote in his settlement offer. Bitcoin's foundation text – Bitcoin: A Peer-to-Peer Electronic Cash System – was published by Nakamoto on 31 October 2008. Nakamoto then exchanged emails with the currency's first adherents before disappearing in 2011. Speculation about Nakamoto's true identity has been rife ever since – including a botched unmasking by Newsweek in 2014 – and Wright stepped forward to claim he was Nakamoto in 2016, months after his name was first cited. However, Wright has so far failed to provide the private keys – a secure code comprising a hexadecimal string of numbers and letters – that would unlock access to the 1.1m original bitcoins "mined" by Nakamoto that are worth about \$46bn (£36bn) at the current price. Wright told a Norwegian court in 2022 that he had destroyed the computer hard drive that would have given him access to the keys. The total value of the bitcoin market is now about \$830bn (£657bn). In rejecting the offer, Copa said it came with loopholes "that would allow him to sue people all over again". Coinbase, a leading crypto exchange and Copa member, claimed last week that bitcoin's evolution had been hampered by legal threats against developers working on the cryptocurrency, which has no central controlling entity, unlike conventional currencies. Copa

also claims that evidence produced by Wright to support his claims has been forged. In a court filing, it alleges that the copy of the bitcoin white paper produced by Wright is written in a different font, using a software system called LaTeX, from the original document, which was written using OpenOffice. Copa said experts representing both parties concluded that the white paper was produced on OpenOffice. It added that the LaTeX file used by Wright does not produce the white paper but instead leads to a pdf "which only superficially resembles the bitcoin white paper but which is in fact substantially different". Copa also claims in its filing that, according to metadata – or information about the file itself – the main LaTeX file submitted by Wright was created on 19 November 2023 as a blank document. Copa added that one document disclosed by Wright appeared to have been written by ChatGPT. In another high court case in 2022, Wright won a pyrrhic victory over a blogger who alleged that his Nakamoto claim was fraudulent. Peter McCormack was found to have caused harm to Wright's reputation by labelling the computer scientist as a fraud who was not Nakamoto, but Wright was awarded nominal damages of £1 by the judge, who ruled that he had given "deliberately false evidence" to support his libel claim. Wright is scheduled to take the stand at the high court on Tuesday, where he will be cross-examined for six days. The high court trial is combining several cases around the identity dispute, including a suit brought by Wright against a group of cryptocurrency developers and crypto exchanges, but the identity issue is viewed as central. A spokesperson for Wright said the trial was "really a war" over who sets the rules and procedures for the bitcoin blockchain, a decentralised form of record keeping that tracks the ownership of a cryptocurrency. Wright supports an offshoot of bitcoin called bitcoin satoshi vision [BSV]. "Think of it as a modern-day tech battle, akin to that between Blu-ray and HD DVD or, for even older readers, Betamax versus VHS," said the spokesperson. • This article was amended on 4 February 2024 to remove references to Meta, which is not a member of the Crypto Open Patent Alliance.