

Australian computer scientist is not bitcoin creator Satoshi Nakamoto, high court rules

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Satoshi Nakamoto, the pseudonymous creator of bitcoin, is not the Australian computer scientist Craig Wright, a high court judge has ruled, ending a fractious two-month trial in London. In a highly unusual decision, the presiding judge, Mr Justice Mellor, issued the verdict within seconds of the case concluding, promising to issue a “fairly lengthy written judgment” in due course. “However, having considered all the evidence and submissions presented to me in this trial, I’ve reached the conclusion that the evidence is overwhelming,” Mellor said. “First, that Dr Wright is not the author of the bitcoin white paper. Second, Dr Wright is not the person who adopted or operated under the pseudonym Satoshi Nakamoto in the period 2008 to 2011. “Third, Dr Wright is not the person who created the bitcoin system. And, fourth, he is not the author of the initial versions of the bitcoin software.” Wright was sued by a conglomerate of cryptocurrency companies called the Crypto Open Patent Alliance (Copa), which sought to prevent him from continuing to claim he had invented the cryptocurrency and from using this to expand his influence over the sector. The trial took an unusual turn even before it started. Copa, whose membership includes the Twitter co-founder Jack Dorsey’s Block, Coinbase and the bitcoin investment vehicle MicroStrategy, accused Wright of fabricating a significant quantity of the documents provided as evidence. The group’s expert witnesses said they found hallmarks of backdated edits, created or altered using versions of software that did not exist at the time the documents were supposedly made. One document contained traces of the involvement of ChatGPT in its creation, Copa claimed, despite the fact that the software did not exist until years after the document was supposedly written. Jonathan Hough KC, representing Copa, told the high court that Wright’s claim was a “brazen lie and elaborate false narrative supported by forgery on an industrial scale”. The expert witnesses for Wright’s defence concurred with many of the assessments, including the finding that the original document describing bitcoin had been made using OpenOffice software, while the version provided by Wright had been written using a tool called LaTeX. In a cross-examination once the trial had opened, Wright subsequently raised concerns that Dr Simon Placks, the expert appointed by his own solicitors, was under-qualified for the task. “I didn’t choose Dr Placks, I didn’t want Dr Placks,” Wright said. “Dr Placks is a psychologist. He has a degree in psychology. He has no qualifications in information security.” Asked if his position was that “the expert called by your side is not a suitably qualified expert to give evidence on what he covers in his reports”, Wright said: “If you’re asking me that directly, yes.” In August 2022, Wright won a defamation case against a man who had called him a “fraud” for claiming he was Nakamoto. But the damages were set at just £1 after the judge ruled he had “advanced a deliberately false case and put forward deliberately false evidence until days before trial”. A Copa spokesperson said: “This decision is a win for developers, for

the entire open source community, and for the truth. For over eight years, Dr Wright and his financial backers have lied about his identity as Satoshi Nakamoto and used that lie to bully and intimidate developers in the bitcoin community. That ends today with the court's ruling that Craig Wright is not Satoshi Nakamoto."