Case law is a primary source of law. It is the law established by courts in judicial decisions and a source of legal precedent.

While the ability to find case law is an essential skill for both law students and law professionals it may be difficult to know where to start.

Australia's most comprehensive case citator is CaseBase.

It lists all the reported and unreported decisions of the Commonwealth and superior courts of the states and territories.

You can access Casebase via the Swinburne library website.

Search for CaseBase Citator in the library search box.

If you’re off-campus you will need to login with your Swinburne username and password.

The Cases tab offers a range of search options. As you start typing the case name the predictive text function provides you with recommendations.

Click Search to go to the list of citations.

A case citation provides you with:

- a brief digest of the case including the decision found by the court,
- other cases referring to this particular case,
- other publications – such as journal articles – that reference the case,
- cases considered by this case,
- and legislation considered by the case.
To see the full text version of the judgement follow the links at the top of the record.

Sometimes the rights to the full text version can belong to another publisher. When this happens CaseBase notes its existence but does not provide a link to the full text.

This case has appeared in more than one report series. The Commonwealth Law Reports, or 'CLR' are the official authorised reports of the High Court of Australia.

The CLR citation appears first, followed by the Australian Law Reports, or 'ALR' and then others. This is because CaseBase lists the most authoritative version first.

As you can see, CaseBase is a great tool.

Take the time to explore it further and see what interesting cases you can find.

If you have any other questions about finding Australian case law speak to a Library staff member or contact us online.