

THE WORLD

Trial told tape says Rolf Harris's sex accuser was lying

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(FILES) This file photo taken on July 04, 2014 shows veteran entertainer Rolf Harris arriving at Southwark Crown Court in London on July 4, 2014. Harris groped several women and girls in public, including a blind and disabled victim, prosecutors told a London court at the start of his trial on January 11, 2017. The former television star, 86, is accused of seven counts of indecent assault and one of sexual assault which allegedly took place between 1971 and 2003. / AFP PHOTO / Niklas HALLEN

The Australian | 7:32AM January 25, 2017



JACQUELIN MAGNAY
Foreign correspondent | Europe | @jacquelinmagnay

Rolf Harris has sought to discredit the evidence of two of the women in his first sex assault trial to show that he is incapable of committing the seven indecent and sexual assault allegations he is accused of in his latest trial.

During the opening day of the defence case at Southwark Crown Court the defence produced two surprise pieces of evidence that were not presented to the first jury, which ultimately convicted Harris on 12 counts of indecent assault involving seven girls and women. Harris was sentenced to five years and nine months for that conviction. But Harris has declined to give evidence in his defence in this latest trial, prompting Judge Alister McCreath to issue a stern warning to the defence team. The judge told the jury that they may draw inferences from such action as they seem fit.

Harris has been listening to the trial where he is accused of assaulting seven girls and women from the ages of 12 to 42 between 1971 and 2004 via video link from Stafford prison.

The fresh defence evidence is an expletive-riddled voice message as well as an email withdrawing earlier claims, in relation to the evidence given in the first trial by Australian woman Tonya Lee.

Lee, now 47, was 15 and in London with a Sydney based youth theatre group in 1986 when she was assaulted by Harris when sitting on his knee and then later outside a bathroom.

Ms Lee has waived her anonymity in respect of being a victim of sexual assault by Harris.

Harris' legal counsel Stephen Vullo told the court "that the jury got it wrong in that (first Harris) trial, we don't say it lightly. we have enormous faith in jury system."

Yesterday the court heard the contents of an "unsavoury" answer phone message left on 23rd June 2013 by Fian McDaid, the ex-partner of Ms Lee. In one part of the message he tells Ms Lee: "You lied about the Rolf Harris shit. You've been a lying ass, f***ing little slut f***ing since I can f***ing remember. You are a lying piece of shit. and I'm going to make sure everybody knows what a lying ass little shit you are".

Mr Vullo told the jury; he says to her you are lying about Rolf Harris. It is a private conversation, but why if she hasn't lied, why say you lied?"

McDaid, also sent police an email on 27th April 2014 as the first trial was being conducted saying he regretted he had been untruthful in his earlier statement and said he had not been aware of the claims made by Lee until 2013, not 2008 as he had claimed.

"To my knowledge Mr Harris is innocent of Ms Lee's claims, I refuse to have this on my conscious any longer, I am willing to stand up and take responsibility for my part in these claims" McDaid wrote in the email that was read to the court. However both the defence and prosecution have been unable to find Mr McDaid to call him as a witness in this latest case.

Mr Vullo said Harris, who has denied the charges in this case as well as the previous trial would not give evidence in his defence in this trial.

"In short, given the age of these allegations, they go back four decades, 45 years," Mr Vullo said. "If a defendant can do no more than say 'I can't remember being there', then the evidential importance of giving evidence is quite weak. For him to come and say 'I can't remember' does not take us that far."

Jacquelin Magnay reports from Southwark Crown Court

