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Push to wipe gay crimes

Legal bid takes aim at hundreds of old convictions

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QUEENSLAND'S legal fraternity is appealing to the State Government to escalate wiping the criminal records of more than 400 men convicted of historical homosexual offences.

Despite homosexuality being decriminalised in Queensland in 1990, hundreds of men still bear the stigma of a criminal conviction stretching back decades.

The convictions range from aggravated sexual assault or sodomy to public nuisance for standing outside a gay nightclub, and have destroyed the men's career options and relationships.

The Queensland Law Reform Commission was tasked to report on the logistics of wiping the historical convictions by the end of last month

and *The Courier-Mail* can reveal that the Government will move to introduce legislation before the next election.

Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk said the Government would deliver on its commitment to clear the criminal convictions.

"This will require a legislative

response but we will still deliver on our commitment to ensure fairness and justice for those who deserve it," Ms Palaszczuk said.

LGBTI Legal Service executive director Emile McPhee said the men appealing to expunge their convictions were not hardened criminals.

"We're not talking about rapists or murderers, or even tax frauds, we're talking about people who were gay and that was enough to get them a conviction," Mr McPhee said.

"Some of these people were just standing outside a gay club at night and were arrested."

There is currently no Queensland legislation allowing criminal convictions to be expunged and Mr McPhee said the damage this had caused was irreparable.

"This is a horrible remnant of what was an incredibly difficult time for these people, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s," Mr McPhee said.

"The impact that some of these convictions and the treatment of homosexuals at that time is difficult to comprehend if you hadn't lived through it."