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Qld gay conviction overturn welcomed

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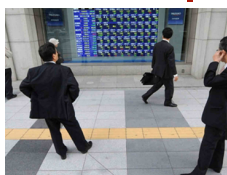
A move by the Queensland government to expunge past convictions for homosexuality has been applauded by legal experts and LGBTI advocates.

Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk delivered a formal apology in state parliament on Thursday and legislation was introduced immediately afterwards

Alan Raabe, convicted for aggravated sexual assault after a consensual homosexual act in 1988, was in the public gallery to hear the apology.

The 63-year-old said his dreams of being a teacher had been dashed by his conviction but he was happy to finally have his record wiped clean.

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'It was like a cloud lifted, somebody cared,' Mr Raabe said.

Until 1991, homosexuality was a criminal offence in Queensland and hundreds were convicted under the laws until they were repealed.

Those convictions were never expunged even after the repeal, meaning those who had been convicted still had to declare their criminal record to potential employers to work in the public services, education and childcare industries.

Matilda Alexander from the LGBTI Legal Service said the legal changes would save lives.

'It sends a clear message that LGBTI people are people, and it eliminates the legislative discrimination and stigma which has faced our community,' she said.

Queensland Council for Civil Liberties President Michael Cope also welcomed the reform.

'Many gay men have been rejected for jobs, particularly in government, simply because when they were 17-year-old boys they were caught in the local park and charged,' Mr Cope said.

'Justice demands that these men be allowed to have these convictions be removed from their records.'

The bill is due back in parliament to be voted on in July.

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