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Death sparks calls to license gas fitting

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The hospital death of one newborn baby and brain damage to another have prompted calls in Parliament for tighter regulation and licensing of medical gas fitting in NSW.

The Labor Party and the NSW Plumbers Union, in a submission to the State Parliament's inquiry into building standards, have called for stronger regulation following the Queensland government's decision to license medical gas work.

NSW secretary for the Plumbing Trades Employees' Union Theo Samartzopoulos said people installing medical gas outlets should be qualified at Certificate III level, like plumbers, and undertake additional training in how to install medical gas.

"The people doing the installation have no real qualifications and there is no regulation or training requirements in NSW," he said.

NSW Labor MP Mark Buttigieg, who has raised the issue in parliament, said governments in Victoria and Queensland had regulated the medical gas industry and similar action was overdue in NSW.

In 2016, newborn John Ghanem died and another baby, Amelia

Khan, suffered brain damage at Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital

after they were given nitrous oxide instead of oxygen. Nitrous oxide can be toxic to babies.

In September this year, Safe-Work NSW dropped charges against the South Western Sydney Local Health District after it entered an enforceable undertaking to improve its contracting and safety systems at a cost of \$536,600.

Mr Buttigieg said it was premature to drop the charges before the NSW Coroner completed its investigation into the death. The Coroner's Court has listed a direc-

tions hearing for November 19. "It fails to address the core issue which is that individuals in NSW are not required to have adequate training or a licence in mechanical services or medical gas," he said.

In 2016, the state's chief health officer reported a contractor for gas and medical supply company BOC Ltd incorrectly installed the gas pipes at Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital and BOC then failed to properly test and commission them. Pipe-work supplying nitrous oxide was labelled incorrectly as oxygen.



Amelia Khan suffered brain damage after she ingested nitrous oxide at a Sydney hospital in 2016.