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Training centre to stop gas tragedies

Jessica McSweeney, Exclusive

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FIVE years after a gas mix up in Bankstown Hospital killed a baby and left another with permanent brain damage, Australia's first dedicated medical gas training centre has opened in Sydney.

The Plumbing Industry Climate Action Centre in Glenwood will provide the new short course to train registered plumbers how to correctly install medical gas canisters including oxygen and nitrous oxide.

In 2016 an untrained contractor incorrectly fitted both gases at Bankstown Hospital, switching the two gases in a maternity unit.

Newborn John Ghanem was killed after breathing in the nitrous oxide and Amelia Khan was left with permanent brain damage.

The new training centre will equip plumbers with the skills to correctly identify, fit and test medical gas to prevent another tragedy.

Before the reforms and the creation of the new short course, workers did not need to be qualified or registered to perform work on hospital gas lines.

Labor MLC Mark Buttigieg was instrumental in getting reforms through parliament, and said the opening of the training centre will make a huge difference in preventing tragedy.

"It's great to see the physical reality of what has been an emotional and challenging campaign to get medical gases and mechanical services licensed and qualified in NSW," he said.

"This is the most valuable thing I've achieved in my life." NSW Plumbers Union assistant secretary Chris Seet said the training centre was a long time coming. "It took too long, but it's great that we can now see what we were pushing for finally come to fruition," he said.