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THE TD'S LETTER, A ROW OVER 'DEAL' AND A €103M A&E

Heneghan promised support 'so long as' his priorities were progressed

EXCLUSIVE

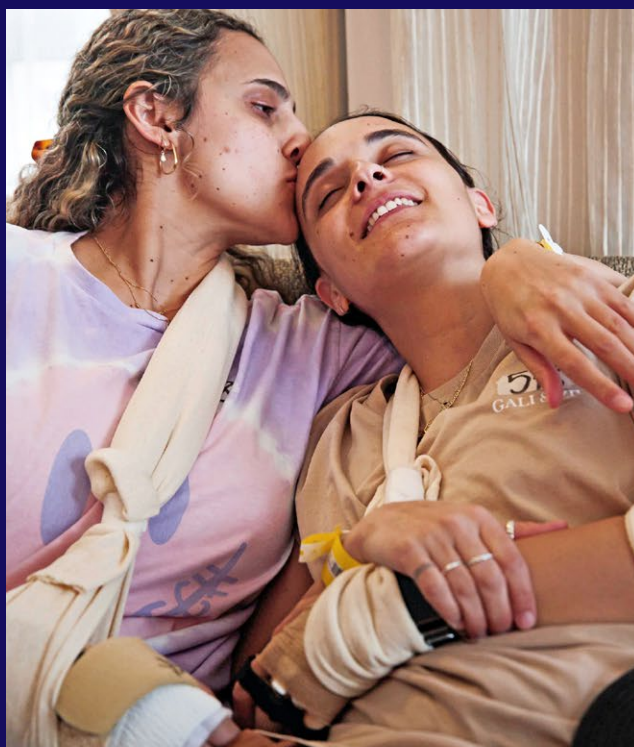
By **Craig Hughes**
Political Editor

THE 'deal' between Independent TD Barry Heneghan and the Government to support the Coalition does include the newly approved €103million A&E unit in Dublin's Beaumont Hospital, the Irish Daily Mail can reveal.

Taoiseach Micheál Martin has long insisted that no pacts were made with the Regional Independents in exchange for their support during Government formation talks.

The Fianna Fáil leader doubled down on this yesterday, saying: 'There is no constituency deal, there is no Heneghan deal.' Mr Heneghan said: 'Call it a deal or don't, what matters is that what I fought for and made a priority is being

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471 days in hell: Romi Gonen and Emily Damari

EXCLUSIVE

'We knew that as long as we were together, we'd make it'

Hostages who survived Hamas describe their astonishing bond

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'I was not elected

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delivered.' Now, correspondence between Mr Heneghan and Mr Martin in recent weeks, obtained by the Mail, outlines the 'priorities' the first-time TD for Dublin Bay North says must be advanced in exchange for his continued support.

'I continue to support the Programme for Government so long as the priorities I was elected on are being progressed,' Mr Heneghan told the Taoiseach.

Mr Heneghan and six other Regional Independent TDs agreed to enter Government alongside Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael in January.

After negotiations were complete, they declared they would have 'input' into the HSE's capital plan, among other areas.

The group's de facto leader and chief negotiator Michael Lowry later claimed responsibility for a €6million increase in funding for roads in his native Co. Tipperary, announced by the new Government in February.

Top of Mr Heneghan's list of priorities, sent to the Taoiseach, was 'a new A&E for Beaumont Hospital' in his Dublin Bay North constituency.

The Capital Plan of new projects published by the HSE yesterday includes a 'new emergency department and reconfiguration

'Not supporting them for the craic'

of existing department' for the north Dublin hospital.

In a statement, Mr Heneghan welcomed the €240million in investment to initiatives in his constituency – which included further works at Beaumont as well as investment in the Community and Hospice Care projects – included in the HSE plan.

His statement also included a quote from his mentor, the former Independent TD and ex-junior minister Finian McGrath, who said: 'It is great to see the "HENEGHAN DEAL" coming to fruition, long may it continue.'

Mr Lowry told Tipperary Live in January, after the Regional Independents agreed to enter Government, that the HSE Capital Plan was one area in which they would have 'input'.

'The group's contribution to the review of the National Development Plan and our input to the HSE Capital Plan will be central to our ongoing work within Government,' he said. In his email to the Taoiseach, Mr Heneghan said: 'From the outset, I made it clear that I wasn't elected to Leinster House to sit on the fence. It would have been far easier for me to do just that, like many others have.'

'But I chose to take a position, to support the formation of a government, and to try to deliver real results for my constituents in Dublin Bay North. That hasn't changed.'

Earlier this week Mr Heneghan protested with students from Gaelcholáiste



Heneghan insists he doesn't answer to anyone except his constituents

By Sarah McGuinness
Political Correspondent

BARRY HENEGHAN has repeatedly declared himself as a man who answers to no political party – only his voters in Dublin Bay North.

But many people have been quick to answer for the 26-year-old TD on his position in (or outside) of government – Finian McGrath being the most vocal.

Mr McGrath, the former disability minister who held Mr Heneghan's seat from 2002 – 2020, has returned to the national spotlight as an adviser and spokesman for Mr Heneghan.

But he was also the first person to spot Mr Heneghan's political potential.

Heneghan grew up in Clontarf while McGrath was an elected representative for the area. He attended Belvedere, the private secondary school, in Dublin city centre before going on to study engineering in Dublin City University and, later, a masters in sustainable energy systems.

Prior to entering politics, the Independent TD worked at a broad variety of jobs.

He served as a barman in The Sheds, a pub on the Clontarf

Reachrann in his constituency. The second priority on his list is 'a permanent school building' for the Gaelcholáiste – something that is being advocated for by all TDs in the constituency.

The deputy's priority list also includes 'progressing private wire legislation and expanding our ORE [offshore renewable energy] developments to reach our climate targets'.

FIANNA Fáil TDs have begun 'subtly' lobbying Micheál Martin for plum committee chair roles.

The Dáil finally agreed yesterday to the establishment of a range of Oireachtas committees to ensure that the

Irish Daily Mail
I GOT EXTRA €6M FOR TIPP ROADS, SAYS LOWRY
Regional Independents benefit in new round of funding worth €713m for local and national roads

Surprising: Mr Heneghan's decision to align with Mr Lowry seafront area, a swim instructor and a delivery driver for the local Chinese takeaway.

Mr Heneghan is also well acquainted with the world of television. His fluency as gaeilge led to him presenting a Hector-esque travel show on TG4, while he also appeared as a contestant on the second season of Virgin Media's Grá ar an Trá, Ireland's answer to Love Island.

A family friend had introduced Mr Heneghan to Mr McGrath – who convinced him to contest a Dublin city council seat in June's local elections.

Just two months later Mr Heneghan began canvassing for the general election that

The legislation would in effect allow private companies to establish their own electricity connections, rather than relying on the national grid, as required at present.

Yesterday, Minister for Enterprise Peter Burke brought proposals to the Cabinet committee on the economy to legislate for private wires.

Other 'priorities' are less defined



November, with housing, disability and sustainability among his top priorities.

He won the fifth and final seat in Dublin Bay North, attributing his victory to connecting with young voters through social media.

For many in this broadly liberal cohort, his decision to align with

Michael Lowry and the centre-right Regional Independent bloc came as a surprise.

His nomination of Sharon Keogh, who has been heavily criticised for anti-LGBT comments, to the Seanad also raised eyebrows among his left-leaning voter basis, as did his decision to vote against the

Heneghan or any other Independents in exchange for their support of the Government.

Mr Martin said: 'There is no constituency deal, there is no Heneghan deal. To be fair to Finian [McGrath], he would have form in the odd bout of hyperbole, but the bottom line is are you seriously suggesting investment in the A&E in Beaumont Hospital constitutes some part of a deal?'

'Subtle' lobbying for plum chair roles on Dáil

By Brian Mahon
Political Correspondent

scrutiny of the work of departments and of government legislation could begin. The process had been delayed by the ongoing row over Dáil speaking time.

Fianna Fáil will have eight committee chair roles to hand out, compared to Fine Gael's

seven. Being a committee chair adds a top-up of €10,000 to a TD's salary of €116,000.

Sources in Fianna Fáil said that there would be a 'subtle' campaign by some to secure roles, clear in the knowledge that party leader Mr Martin does not like to be lobbied for jobs.

It is also understood that the party's chief whip Mary Butler,

pictured left, handed out a 'CAO-like form' to all TDs asking them to fill out in order of preference the committees they would like to sit on.

As lead opposition party Sinn Féin will chair the Public Accounts Committee, the Finance Committee, the Justice, Home Affairs and Migration committee, the Defence and

to sit on the fence'



Musical chairs: Michael Lowry and Barry Heneghan appeared close until the younger TD got flak over their association

HENEGHAN'S TOP PRIORITIES

✓ **A new A&E for Beaumont Hospital**

— **A permanent school building for Gaelcholáiste Reachrann**

✓ **Progressing Private wire legislation**

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the 26-year-old could claim pledges in the Programme for Government while requesting to sit on the opposition benches.

He emerged bruised from the raucous scenes in the Dáil last month – and with a new place on the chamber's benches. Mr Heneghan moved seats after appearing in video footage beside Michael Lowry as he gave a two-finger gesture to People Before Profit's Paul Murphy.

According to Mr McGrath, who was one of a number of Independent TDs to support the 2016 Fine Gael government, the suggestion to move seats came from him and Mr Heneghan's team.

It was also Mr McGrath who coined the term 'the Heneghan deal' in welcoming the news of the Beaumont Hospital A&E funding.

While Mr Heneghan has made his own view on his position in parliament clear, it's likely his adviser will also give his two cents on the debate in the days ahead.

the Occupied Territories Bill.

'There are going to be things that I have to vote for that I do not fundamentally agree with because it keeps me with the access to deliver for my constituents,' he said in the weeks after the vote.

The Dáil speaking rights row once again put Mr Heneghan in the spotlight, with many questioning how

committees

National Security Committee and the Public Petitions Committee.

Labour will chair the Arts and Media Committee along with the Travelling Committee, while the Social Democrats will chair Health and also the Drugs Use Committee.

The other two technical groups in the Dáil will chair the Irish Language and the Budgetary Oversight Committees respectively.

ing.' Contacted about the correspondence from Mr Heneghan, a spokesman for the Taoiseach said he had no further comment.

Mr Heneghan wrote to Mr Martin at the end of last month informing him that he was moving seats in the Dáil chamber away from Mr Lowry following the Tipperary TD's two-fingered gesture at People Before Profit-Solidarity TD Paul Murphy amid chaotic scenes in the House.

Mr Heneghan said he remains a member of the Regional Independent technical group. Contacted by the Mail last night, the TD said that while there was 'no signed deal' what he 'prioritised' is getting done.

'I accept the Taoiseach's point that there was no signed deal made, but call it a deal or don't, what matters is that what I fought for and made a priority is being delivered,' he said.

Asked if his continued support of the Government was contingent on his priorities being progressed, he said: 'I'm not supporting Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael for the craic.'

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By Sarah McGuinness

THOUSANDS of children may have to be recalled for assessment over possibly unnecessary surgery, Sinn Féin's deputy leader has claimed.

Pearse Doherty told the Dáil yesterday that the 561 children who have been identified as potentially undergoing needless and evasive hip operations are 'just the tip of the iceberg' – and that many more families may be impacted by the unfolding scandal.

He also took aim at the fact that the previous Health Minister, Stephen Donnelly, was informed of the audit taking place almost a year ago while parents have been 'left in the dark' over their children's surgeries. An audit of paediatric hip dysplasia surgeries at Children's Health Ireland (CHI) hospitals has found that hundreds of children operated on between 2021 and 2023 did not meet the threshold for the procedure.

As reported by The Ditch, a draft report on the review states that almost 80% of those operated on at National Orthopaedic Hospital Cap-pagh, and 60% of those at Temple Street, did not meet the threshold for surgery in that time-frame.

But Mr Doherty told TDs yesterday the issue 'goes way beyond' the two years being

'It is only the tip of the iceberg'

examined in the audit. He said his party was being contacted by parents concerned about surgeries and recommended operations from a decade and further ago.

'We know that 561 children must now be independently assessed following the audit, which covered the years 2021 to 2023, but that is only two years. What we do not know is how many children are affected. It may be hundreds or even thousands. Just how bad is this?' he said during Leaders' Questions.

'We are being contacted by parents whose children's cases reach back a decade and further. The emails and phone calls keep coming. It looks like 2021 to 2023 is only the tip of the iceberg. It goes way beyond those two years.'

Mr Doherty raised the case of one 'horrified parent' whose daughter was a patient in Temple Street in 2016 from the age of one year right up to three years. A consultant in the hospital diagnosed the young girl with hip dysplasia and insisted that she would have to undergo surgery that would have required 'sawing into her hip bone and reshaping the socket'.

Because the child never showed any symptoms, the

'THOUSANDS' MORE CHILDREN MAY BE AFFECTED BY HIP SURGERY SCANDAL – SF



Parents 'left in the dark': Pearse Doherty spoke out

parents sought a second opinion from a specialist orthopaedic surgeon in the North. In a letter to the parents, seen by the Irish Daily Mail, the specialist said they did not believe the child was suffering from significant hip dysplasia and that they 'certainly would not recommend any surgical intervention'.

'To do so would be potentially meddlesome,' they said.

Mr Doherty said that the parents concerned were 'horrified' that the doctor in Temple Street had made 'such an error of judgment'.

'This was years ago. The parent went on to tell us that the stress they were under during this time was like nothing they had ever experienced before... That is not the only case we have heard of where people got a second opinion, to be told that no condition at all was evident,' he said.

The revelation comes after a damning report into the spinal surgery scandal in Temple Street earlier this week, which found that springs made of 'corrosive' non-alloyed steel were 'wrongfully' inserted into three children.

'Children's lives have been devastated by the litany of

failures in healthcare,' Mr Doherty said. 'There is a pattern of broken behaviour when it comes to children's healthcare. It is the same hospitals over and over again. The Government is standing back and acting as a spectator in all of this.'

Mr Doherty told the Dáil the Department of Health confirmed to Sinn Féin that the last Health Minister, Mr Donnelly, was notified that the audit was being ordered last May, two months before it appeared in the media.

Numerous Government sources have said it is highly unlikely Mr Donnelly raised the issue formally at Cabinet given that the audit is still under way. But the extent to which Mr Donnelly was briefed on the potential scale of unnecessary surgeries remains unclear. Mr Doherty said: 'Patients only received letters about the scandal in recent weeks. Stephen Don-

'Beyond worst nightmare'

nally was informed about this a year ago and the current [Health] minister [Jennifer Carroll MacNeill] was briefed in February. We are talking about the possibility of young children put under the knife and their bones being sawed into. It is traumatic surgery, and it is happening to children between the ages of one year and seven years.

'It is beyond the worst nightmare of any parent.'

Fine Gael deputy leader Helen McEntee said there is 'no information to suggest that any patient safety incident has occurred' in relation to the hip surgeries.

'An audit is currently taking place... I agree that if there are potentially more cases stretching back further and that families of children need to be written to, that is exactly what must happen,' she said.