

# THE IRISH Sun SAYS

## Party's over, FG

### FINE Gael are sinking like the Titanic.

In truth, they have only themselves to blame. Aside from their failures in health and homelessness, their election campaign has been badly handled.

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar's claims to the contrary yesterday were like the scene in the Naked Gun movie where Frank Drebin stands outside an exploding fireworks factory telling onlookers: "Nothing to see here!"

However, it must seem rather galling for them to be trailing the party who brought the nation to the brink of bankruptcy in 2008.

With such a Hobson's choice facing the electorate, perhaps the rise of Sinn Fein is not so surprising.

Serious questions have been raised over the financial viability of the Shinner manifesto, but it hasn't hurt them in the opinion polls.

There are some in this country who will never give them a vote, but plenty of others are now considering it.

And though both Fianna Fail and Fine Gael are adamant they will never enter coalition with Mary Lou's party, you would be a fool to believe them. When the chips are down and the numbers don't add up, both would probably do a deal if it meant getting into power.

As we head into the final week of campaigning – with all the pledges, half-truths and outright lies that come with it – voters should consider them all with extreme scepticism.

**There's an old saying about a politician's promise — and it didn't come about by accident.**

## Terror returns

**YESTERDAY'S incident in London is proof that the maniacs intent on causing as much mayhem as possible in the West have not gone away.**

It is too early to speculate on who was behind it, but it hardly matters.

Sadly, there is virtually no way of preventing these attacks, other than the action taken by police to end it. We are lucky on this side of the Atlantic at least that our gun laws prevent more carnage.

The terror threat may never fully die out but the best way to defeat it is to continue living our lives as we should.

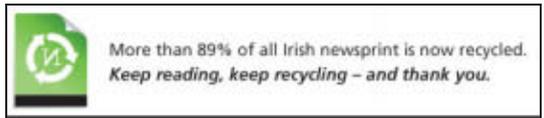
**If the price for freedom is eternal vigilance, then we have an obligation to use what we are paying for.**

## 2 for the road

**SUSAN Sarandon and Geena Davis looked even younger than before at a Thelma and Louise reunion in New York.**

The pair looked fresh-faced for the 30th anniversary of the hit road movie, in which they drive off a cliff at the end.

**The years must have fallen off them too.**



# CHARITY CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

**CHARITY Children in Hospital Ireland is celebrating 50 years of play in kids hospitals around the country.**  
The charity relies on volunteers to bring fun and enjoyment to outpatient clinics

across Ireland. **Ronan MacManus, 23, from Newbridge, Co Kildare, is one of those dedicating his time to help. He has been a volunteer since June 2017.**  
He does it because CHI volunteers

helped his mother when he spent weeks in Crumlin Hospital as a tot.  
Ronan tells **FIONA ELLIS** his story, and explains why he'd encourage anyone to take time to help kids play in hospital.

**INITIATIVE . . . Crumlin Children's Hospital are helped by volunteers from CHI, below**



**FUN BOOST . . . playing can be helpful for kids who are sick**

**“ I WAS in Crumlin Children's Hospital in quarantine from a viral infection, when I was around six months old for several weeks.**

A volunteer offered my mam to get some respite so she could get something to eat and she never forgot that kindness. She really appreciated the compassion she was shown, and when I heard that story I thought, 'I can return that to other parents and children as well'.  
My mam was allowed to go out and a volunteer stayed with me. There was no worry about me being alone, and just having that reassurance made everything better.

*We were both very young, myself and my brother Eoin, who is four years older than me, so I can imagine it was a very, very stressful time.*

It is exhausting worrying. I can only empathise with parents whose children are in hospital.

It's tough. On a normal day we go in as a team, into a baby ward, say, and we talk to the nurses and ask about parents who might need a break.

And they'll tell us, 'Oh, room 14 would love a cup of coffee' so we go to the room, offer them to go

out for a cup of coffee and we stay with the child. We play, babysit, play games, sing songs.

It's fantastic. It gives the parents a chance to collect themselves, have something to eat, get a shower.

It makes things a little bit better for them.

We are trained in everything from hand washing to communication skills. You are going in with confidence, which is so important.

The first child I came across had cancer, I met him on my first day over two

and a half years ago. And then about two months ago I saw him in the hospital again. He came back after all that time to get his final treatment.

I knew his name straight away. Just to see him all grown up and healthy and ready to start his life. It was fantastic to see.

There has been a couple of times where you see patients who have been gone for a year and they come back for their final treatment.

They've finished with whatever they are going through. It is touching. One thing we say is, 'I hope I never see you again'.

Sometimes it is difficult to see some of the sadness that the children are going through. But there are services in CHI that make sure we are OK as well – that we are not worried.

*There is always someone to chat to at CHI, it's a fantastic charity.*

The amount of people I talk to in CHI and no one has ever regretted joining.

There is such a fantastic community within the charity. Every year there is a get-together where we meet volunteers from all over the country. We share stories and talk about our experiences.

I would encourage absolutely anyone to join. We are making a difference in child-

ren's hospital experience as well as the parents' and so it is a win-win situation. Each team does two hours a week. Throughout the week there are morning, afternoon and evening teams and there is a Saturday morning team.

I am part of the Saturday morning team and go in from 10.30am to 12.30pm.

There are still children in at the weekend so it's fantastic that at the weekends there is a playroom that can be opened and we can babysit and give that extra bit of help.

I find I am most useful at setting up PlayStations, talking about Fortnite – I can talk a little bit more about things like that because I play games as well. I can relate to them on that level.

The more volunteers we have the more playrooms that can be opened, more children can play and forget about the procedures and the routines of being in hospital.

It's hard. They could be there for months. Two hours a week could make a huge difference in making their hospital stay a bit easier.

**● CHILDREN in Hospital Ireland is hosting an information session on Wednesday February 12 from 6pm to 8pm.**

If you would like to volunteer to support play in Crumlin, Temple Street, Tallaght or Connolly Urgent Care Centre please contact [info@childreninhospital.ie](mailto:info@childreninhospital.ie) or call 01 290 3510 to register.

For more information, see [childreninhospital.ie](http://childreninhospital.ie).



**DEDICATED . . . Ronan and, inset, as tot with Eoin**

