

Stardust fire campaigner runs for Dail

By Sarah Neville

STARDUST Victims' Committee spokesperson, Antoinette Keegan has confirmed her candidacy for the next general election today. Keegan, who will run as an independent candidate in Dublin North Central, is seeking a new inquiry into the Stardust fire but she denies that she is not a single issue candidate. Families of the victims of the Stardust disaster have been campaigning since the first inquest in 1982 for a fresh inquest to take place. Last year, it looked like that might happen but early in the New Year the government announced that they were going to set up an external examination instead. However, the Stardust Victims' Committee rejected this proposal. Keegan told *Newsday*

that the terms of reference were, 'worse now than the terms of reference in 1981.' She said that the victims of the Stardust disaster 'were up against a brick wall'. Keegan's manifesto also calls for more Gardaí on the street, buses with wheelchair access and increased payments for carers. She sees a lack of sport and recreation facilities as a big issue for the Dublin North Central area. Keegan says a similar lack of sports facilities existed in 1981, something she says caused so many of the area's young people to go to discos like the Stardust. Even if the government announced a new inquiry at this stage, Keegan told *Newsday* that she would not pull out of the election race. She said that she has been approached by people in the community and she feels that she has a lot of support. Keegan's candidacy will

cause further upset in the race for seats in Dublin North Central, which is changing from a four seat to a three seat constituency in this election. Last time round, Sean Haughey (FF) got the first seat and is likely to hold on to it. Ivor Callely (FF), Richard Bruton (FG) and Finian McGrath (Ind) only got seats after the sixth count and there was very little difference between these tallies. Keegan says that she is 'not trying to take seats from anybody' but with nine candidates vying for three seats her first preferences could be at the expense of independent candidate Finian McGrath who was the last to get a seat in 2002. She could also take votes from Fianna Fáil's Ivor Callely who was involved in a scandal in 2005 when it emerged that he had had his house painted for free.



Antoinette Keegan who announced today that she will run as an independent in the next general election in the Dublin North Constituency



Russell O'Connor and Eoin Byrne collecting for RAG week. Full Story pg 5.

Garda suspended over claimed rape of 14-year-old boy

By Regina Horan

AN INVESTIGATION is being carried out into the alleged involvement of a trainee garda in the sexual abuse of a teenage boy. A Garda spokesman confirmed this morning that a member of the force was suspended from duty following claims he arranged for a 14 year old schoolboy to have sex with several men. He was summoned to Tallaght Garda Station - not his station - on Friday where he was cautioned and interviewed about his relationship with the teenager. Two men in their 40s were also arrested at the weekend but they have since been released. The men were questioned at Swords Garda Station where the incident room is based. One

of them is a language teacher and the other is a truck-driver. While further arrests have not yet been made, up to ten men are thought to have been involved in the abuse. The 21 year old garda is suspected of befriending the boy and introducing him to the men who abused him over a 12-month period. The alarm was raised when the teen's mother found explicit text messages on his mobile phone. She walked into Coolock garda station last Wednesday and made a formal complaint to a senior detective. An investigation was immediately launched. Gardaí took statements from the boy which led them to believe that he had been abused by several men. The boy brought gardaí to carparks and a number of other locations in Dublin where

the alleged abuse took place. After tracing the mobile phones that the inappropriate messages were sent from, they discovered that one of the phones belonged to a probationer garda, based in south Dublin. A probationer garda is one who has successfully completed the required 58-week training period and has been attested to the force. In other words, the garda is fully trained with the exception of having to complete a dissertation and graduate from Templemore. Gardaí say they have have not come across any other children who may be victims of the suspected paedophiles. The abuse investigation involves detectives from Coolock and Swords stations as well as members of the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Unit.

Poor children twice as likely to die by 15

CHILDREN from poorer backgrounds are twice as likely to die before the age of 15 as those from affluent homes, a shock new study revealed today. A new all-island alliance shows factors linked to a person's economic background can put their lives at greater risk. Children in low-income homes are more likely to be born small with low birth rates, leaving them with poorer health in later life and reduced life expectancy, according to the first study by the Public Health Alliance. The rate of low birth weights was higher in Belfast than Dublin, but both lagged behind Scandinavian countries. Dr Thomas Quigley, co-chair of the alliance, said the study - entitled Health Inequalities on the Island of Ireland: The Facts, the Causes, the Remedies - found poor health experiences in childhood, even before birth, were leaving lifelong scars. It found people who are poor and socially excluded more likely to die at a younger age and experience a higher rate of ill health. (breakingnews.ie)