**Press Release – Mercy Law Resource Centre’s Annual Report 2021 to be launched by Fr Peter McVerry**

In summary:

* 2021 Annual Report will be launched at 4pm on Thursday 27 October
* Fr Peter McVerry, founder of the Peter McVerry Trust, will formally launch the report
* The report highlights the increase in clients contacting Mercy Law in late 2021 because they were **refused access to emergency homeless accommodation**. That trend has continued into 2022, with a more than **180% increase** in such queries in the year to date when compared against 2021.
* MLRC believes we must move toward a rights-based approach to housing to put a stop to the entrenched housing crisis and prevent it reoccurring in the future.
* In 2021 MLRC:
  + **Received over 2,000 phone calls**
  + **Assisted** **503 individuals and families at risk of homelessness**
  + **Opened new 276 legal advice files**
  + **Advised 44 organisations**

Mercy Law Resource Centre (MLRC) launches its Annual Report 2021 on Thursday 27 October. MLRC extends sincere thanks to Fr. Peter McVerry for formally launching the report.

Managing Solicitor **Aoife Kelly-Desmond** said:

*“2021 was a tumultuous year. While the world at large was relieved at the lifting of pandemic restrictions, for those at the brink of homelessness the easing of emergency measures led to even greater instability and uncertainty. Speaking now in late 2022, we are saddened by the continued deterioration of the severe housing crisis. Factors such as soaring inflation and constriction in the rental market have combined to drive more people into homeless. At the same time, capacity in state-funded homeless services has become strained to the point of breaking.*

*The last three months of 2021 saw a big increase in people contacting Mercy Law because they were refused access to emergency homeless accommodation. This trend has continued into 2022, with a major increase in these queries in the year to date (up 180% year-on-year). These cases are top priority for our solicitors due to their urgency and the distress caused to clients by being denied access to basic shelter. However, homeless accommodation is never a permanent solution. The only way to truly deal with the housing crisis is to have sufficient housing supply that meets the varied needs of everyone in society. MLRC believes we must move toward a rights-based approach to housing to put a stop to the entrenched housing crisis and prevent it reoccurring in the future.”*

**ENDS**

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**Notes to editors**

1. Mercy Law Resource Centre (MLRC) is an independent law centre, registered charity and company limited by guarantee. MLRC provides free legal advice and representation for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. It also seeks to advocate for change in laws, policies and attitudes which unduly and adversely impact people who are at the margins of our society.  MLRC provides five key services: free legal advice clinics; legal representation in the areas of housing and social welfare law; legal support and training to organisations working in the field of homelessness; policy work; and a befriending service.  MLRC’s clients are local authority tenants and people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. They include people who are trying to move away from homelessness who may be struggling with issues often linked to homelessness e.g. discrimination, addiction, leaving prison, mental illness and relationship breakdown.
2. MLRC has built strong working relationships with other organisations working in the field of homelessness, including Focus Ireland, Crosscare Advocacy Service, and the Citizens Information Centres. Since our inception in 2009, MLRC has provided free legal advice and/or representation to over 10,000 individuals and families.  For more about our work, see [www.mercylaw.ie](http://www.mercylaw.ie)
3. In 2021, MLRC published a policy report entitled ‘Minority Groups and Housing Services: Barriers to Access’ with support from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC). It Is available [here.](https://mercylaw.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/ML_2020_Minority-Groups-and-Housing-Services_Report_D6.pdf)