



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**  
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA



# **Benefit Fact Sheets Snapshot March 2026 Quarter**

# In the Benefit Fact Sheets Snapshot

The Benefit Fact Sheets provide a high-level view of trends in benefit receipt.

The Benefit Fact Sheets are published quarterly and contain information on income support provided by the Ministry.

For technical information about the Benefit Fact Sheets, like how we protect our clients' confidentiality, please see:

[www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/2025/bfs-t1-stats-information-mar-26.pdf](http://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/2025/bfs-t1-stats-information-mar-26.pdf)

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<b>Main benefit assistance</b>	3–7
Main benefits	
Jobseeker Support	
Sole Parent Support	
Supported Living Payment	
Regional distribution of Jobseeker Support	
Regional distribution of Sole Parent Support	
<b>Main benefit grants and cancellations</b>	8–9
Main benefit grants	
Main benefit cancellations	
<b>Benefit sanctions</b>	10–11
<b>Supplementary assistance</b>	12
<b>Hardship assistance</b>	13–15
Total hardship assistance	
Reasons for granting hardship assistance	
Special Needs Grants	
Benefit Advances	

# Main benefit assistance

## Main benefits

At the end of March 2026, **409,575 people** were receiving a main benefit. This was up 11,412 or 2.9 percent when compared to March 2025.

The proportion of the working-age population receiving a main benefit increased to **12.7 percent**, up 0.4 percentage points from March 2025.

Figure 1a: Number and proportion of people receiving a main benefit at the end of the last six March quarters.

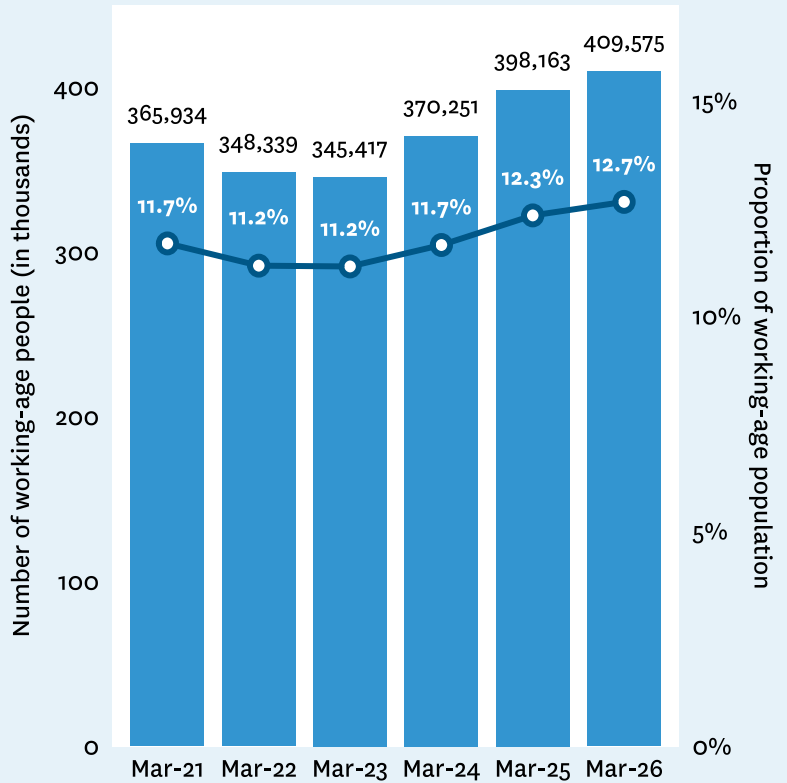
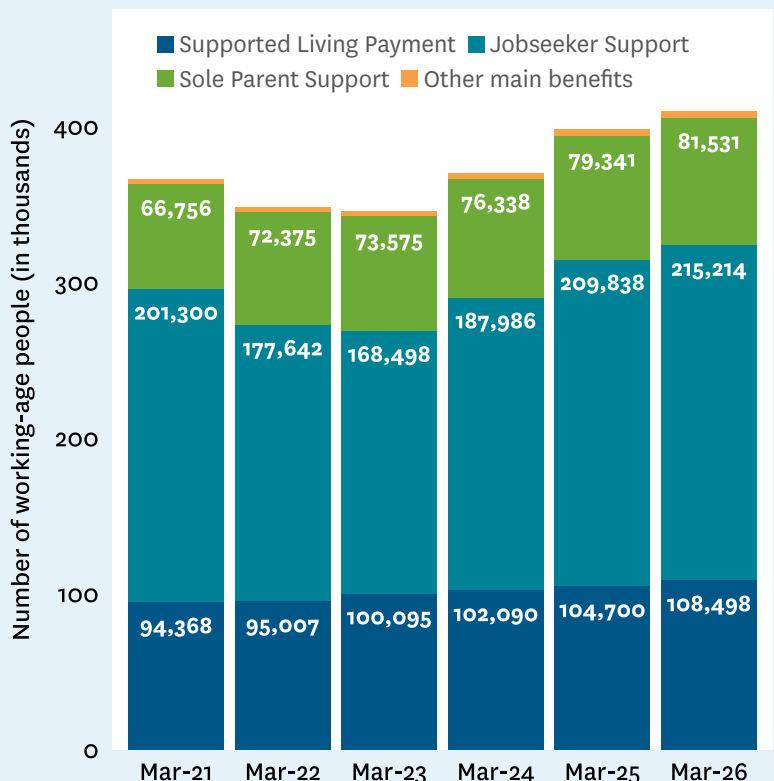


Figure 1b: Number of people receiving a main benefit by benefit type at the end of the last six March quarters.



In Figure 1b, other main benefits include:

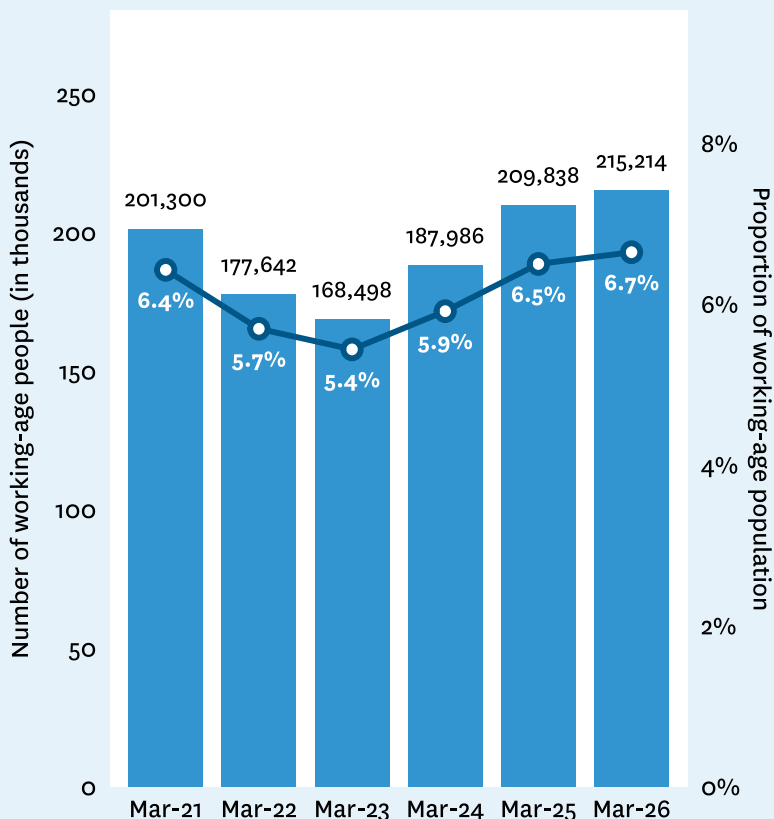
- Youth Payment and Young Parent Payment
- Emergency Benefit
- Emergency Maintenance Allowance
- Jobseeker Support Student Hardship

# Jobseeker Support

At the end of March 2026, **215,214 people** were receiving Jobseeker Support. This was up 5,376 or 2.6 percent when compared to March 2025.

The proportion of the working-age population receiving this benefit increased to **6.7 percent**, up 0.2 percentage points from March 2025.

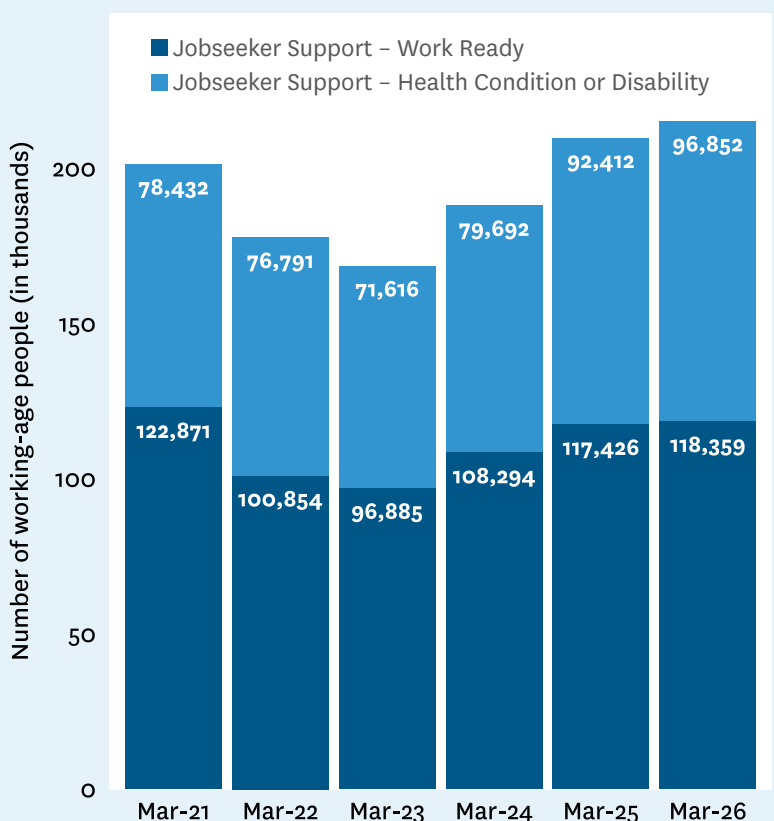
Figure 2a: Number and proportion of people receiving Jobseeker Support at the end of the last six March quarters.



At the end of March 2026, **118,359 people** were receiving Jobseeker Support – Work Ready. This was up 933 or 0.8 percent when compared to March 2025.

At the end of March 2026, **96,852 people** were receiving Jobseeker Support – Health Condition or Disability. This was up 4,440 or 4.8 percent when compared to March 2025.

Figure 2b: Number of people receiving Jobseeker Support by benefit type at the end of the last six March quarters.



Jobseeker Support is for people who are actively looking for or preparing for work. It includes people with part-time work obligations and those who cannot look for work at the moment (e.g. those with a health condition, injury, or disability).

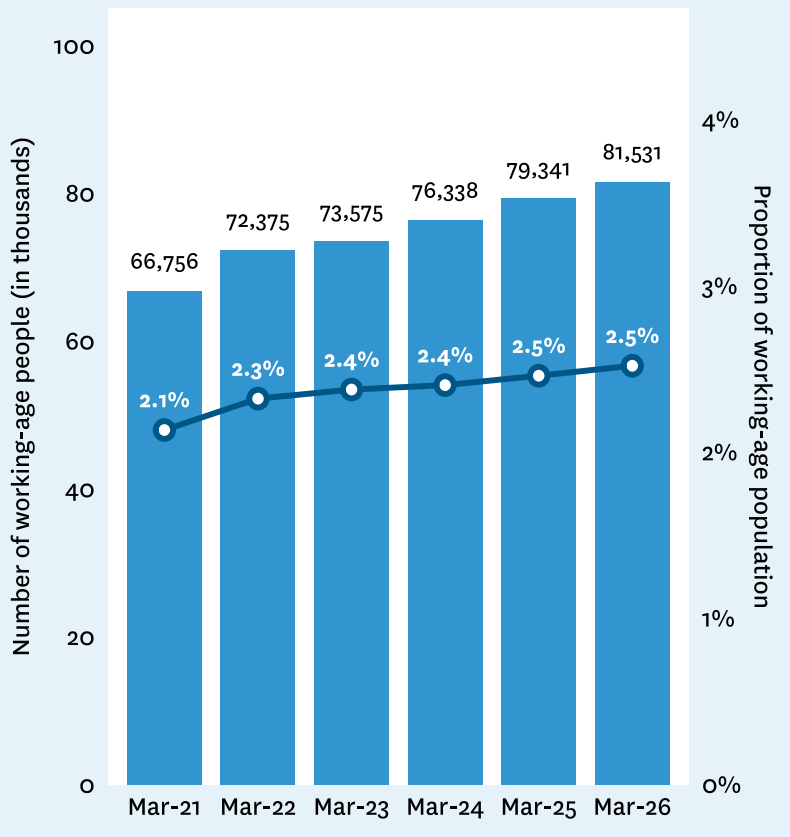
# Sole Parent Support

At the end of March 2026, **81,531 people** were receiving Sole Parent Support. This was up 2,190 or 2.8 percent when compared to March 2025.

The proportion of the working-age population receiving this benefit is **2.5 percent**, the same as this time last year.

Sole Parent Support is for single parents with at least one dependent child under 14 years.

Figure 3: Number and proportion of people receiving Sole Parent Support at the end of the last six March quarters.



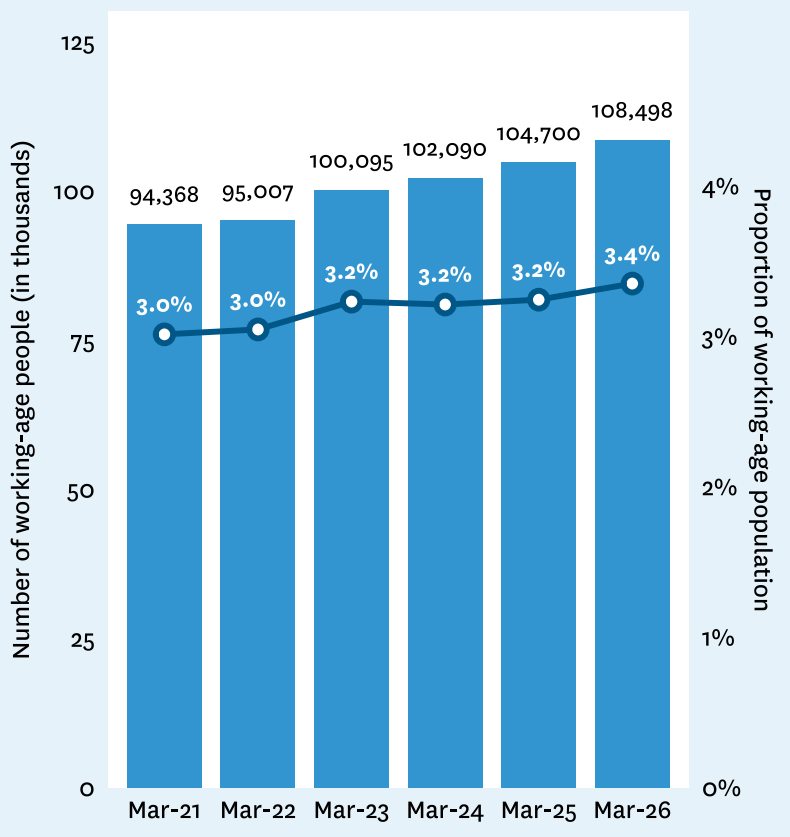
# Supported Living Payment

At the end of March 2026, **108,498 people** were receiving Supported Living Payment. This was up 3,798 or 3.6 percent when compared to March 2025.

The proportion of the working-age population receiving this benefit is **3.4 percent**, up 0.2 percentage points from March 2025.

Supported Living Payment is for people who have, or care for someone with, a health condition, injury or disability that limits their ability to work.

Figure 4: Number and proportion of people receiving Supported Living Payment at the end of the last six March quarters.



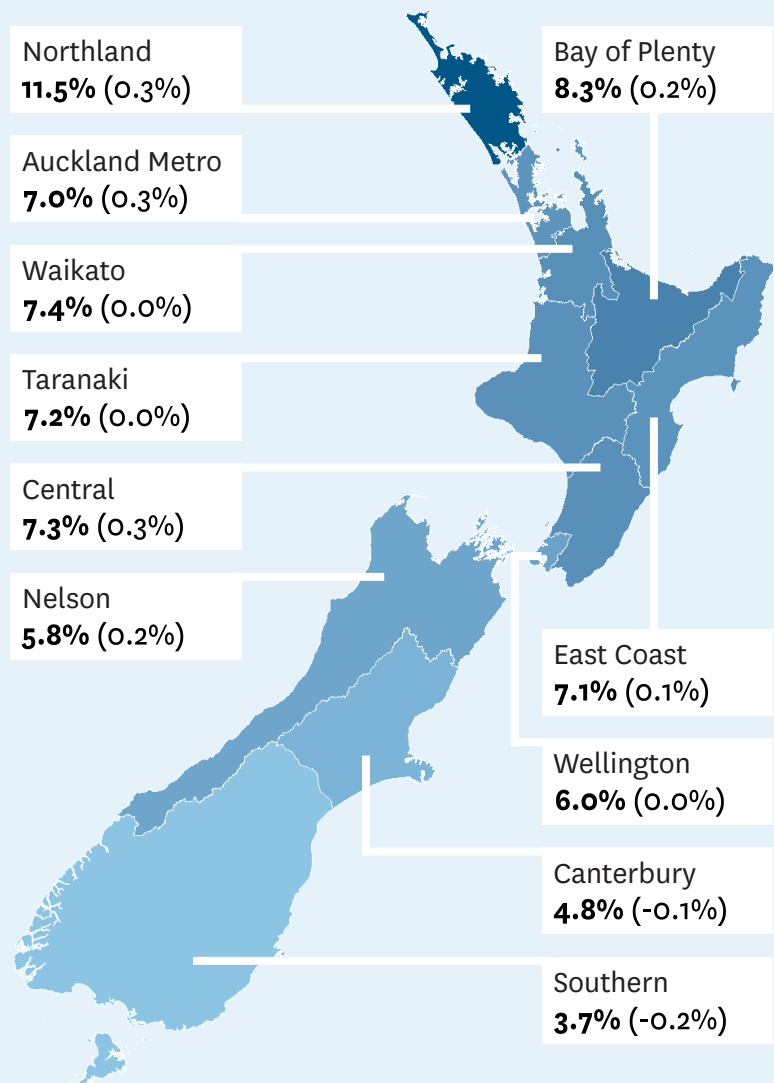
# Regional distribution of Jobseeker Support

Between March 2025 and March 2026, the proportion of the working-age population receiving Jobseeker Support increased in most regions.

The largest percentage point increase was seen in Northland, Auckland Metro and Central (0.3 percent).

At the end of March 2026, Northland had the highest proportion receiving Jobseeker Support, at 11.5 percent.

Figure 5: Regional distribution of Jobseeker Support as a proportion of the population by Work and Income region, as at March 2026.



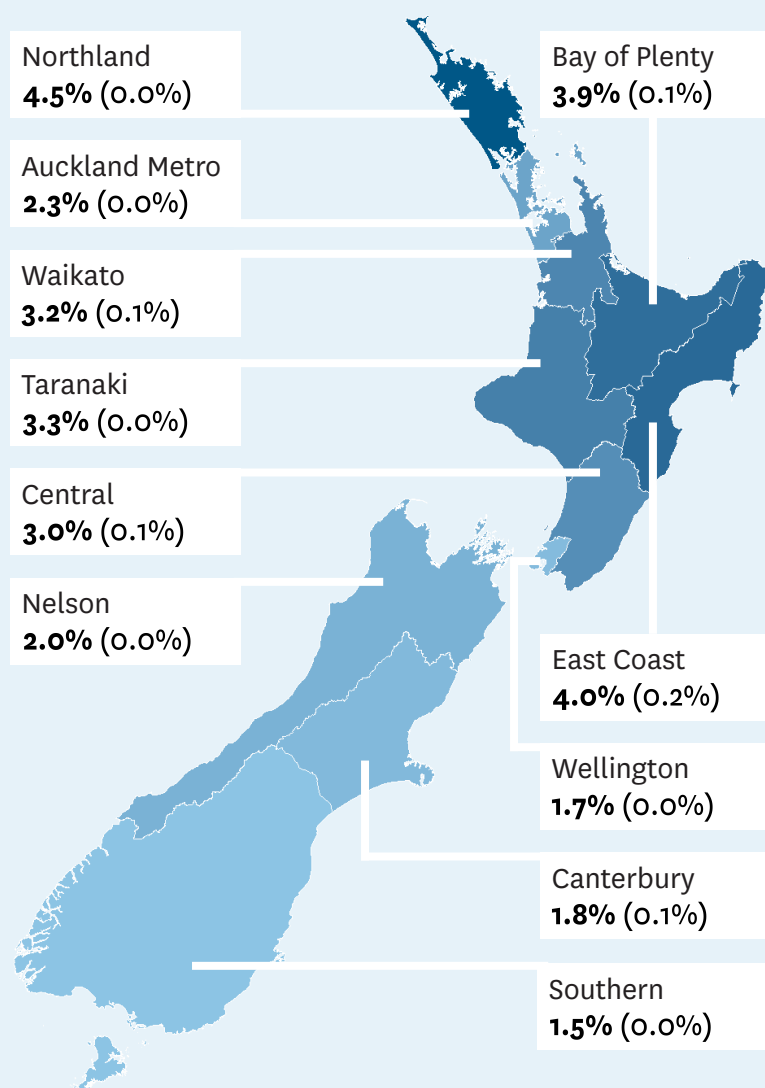
Figures in labels refer to 'working-age population proportion' and 'percentage point change' respectively. All percentages have been rounded to the nearest decimal point. As a result, a percentage point change may be displayed as zero.

# Regional distribution of Sole Parent Support

Between March 2025 and March 2026, the proportion of the working-age population receiving Sole Parent Support across most regions was relatively unchanged.

At the end of March 2026, Northland had the highest proportion receiving Sole Parent Support, at 4.5 percent.

Figure 6: Regional distribution of Sole Parent Support as a proportion of the population by Work and Income region, as at March 2026.



Figures in labels refer to 'working-age population proportion' and 'percentage point change' respectively. All percentages have been rounded to the nearest decimal point. As a result, a percentage point change may be displayed as zero.

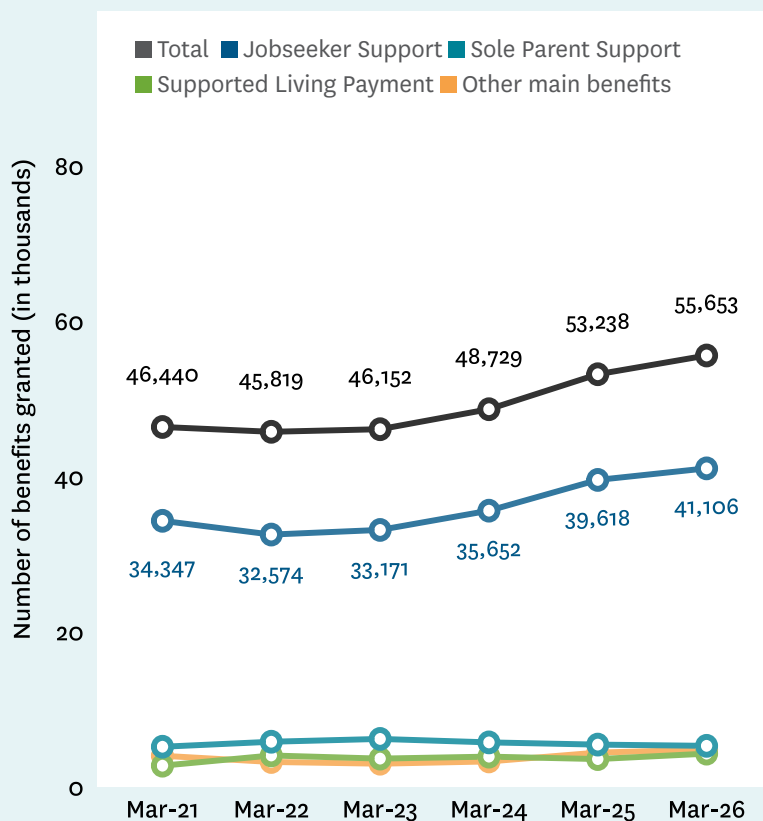
# Main benefit grants and cancellations

## Main benefit grants

There were **55,653 main benefits granted** in the March 2026 quarter, an increase of 2,415 or 4.5 percent from the March 2025 quarter.

There were **41,106 Jobseeker Support grants** in the March 2026 quarter, an increase of 1,488 or 3.8 percent from the March 2025.

Figure 7: Number of main benefits granted during the last six March quarters.



A main benefit grant is the formal acceptance of entitlement to a main benefit.

# Main benefit cancellations

There were **65,136 main benefit cancellations** in the March 2026 quarter, an increase of 8,451 or 14.9 percent from the March 2025 quarter.

There were **24,615 exits into work** in the March 2026 quarter, an increase of 1,347 or 5.8 percent from the March 2025 quarter.

Figure 8a: Number of main benefit cancellations by benefit type during the last six March quarters.

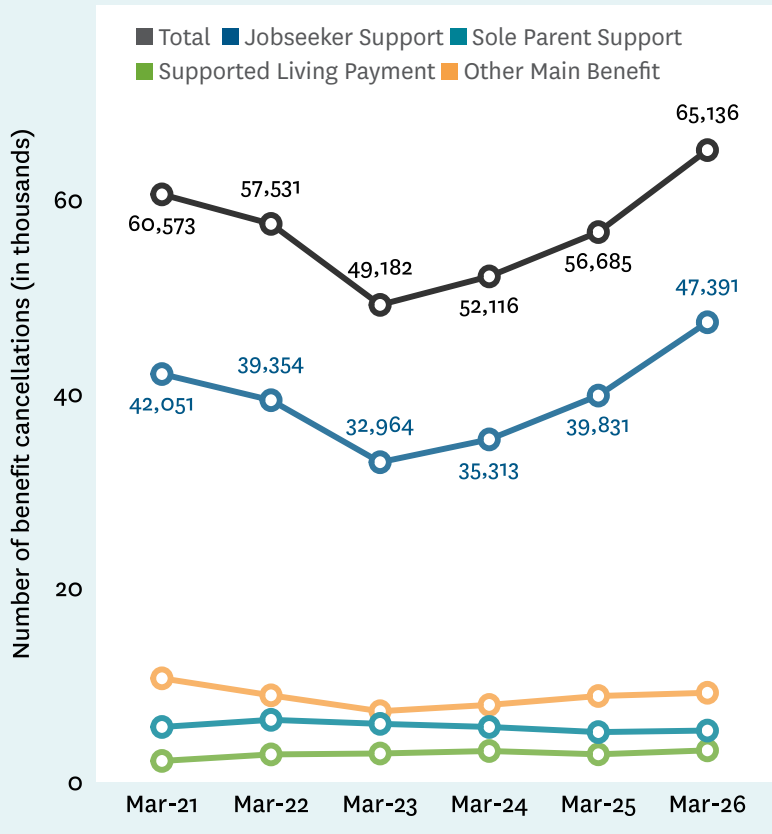
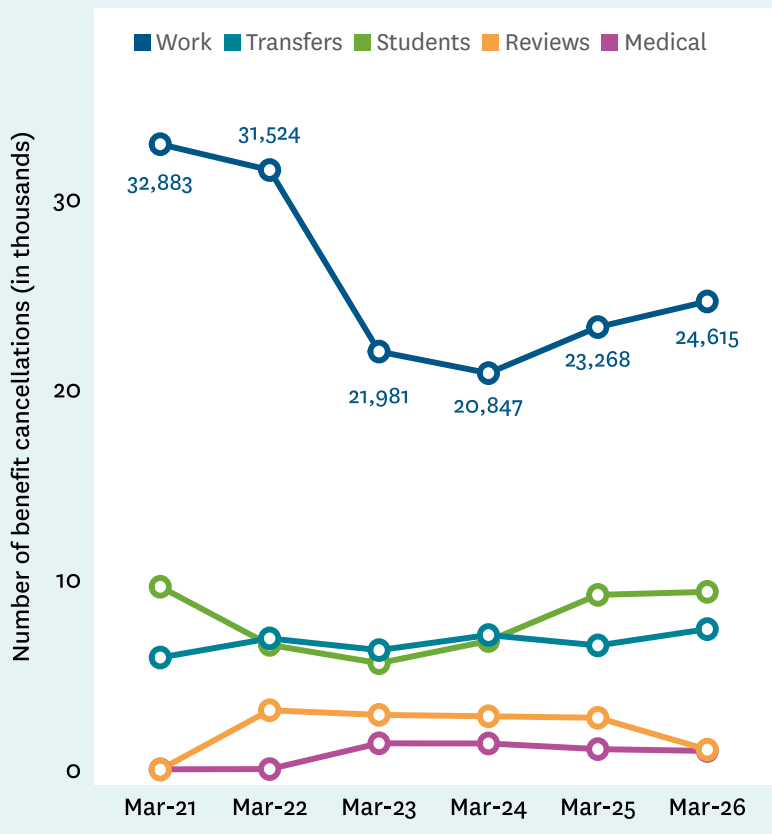


Figure 8b: Number of main benefit cancellations by selected reasons during the last six March quarters.



A main benefit cancellation is the formal process that ends the entitlement to a main benefit.

# Benefit sanctions

The number of sanctions issued during the March 2026 quarter was **12,582**, a decrease of 903 or 6.7 percent from the March 2025 quarter.

During the March 2026 quarter, the main reasons for unfulfilled work obligation sanctions were **clients not attending appointments** including seminar appointments (8,829 sanctions) and **failing to prepare for work** (3,075 sanctions).

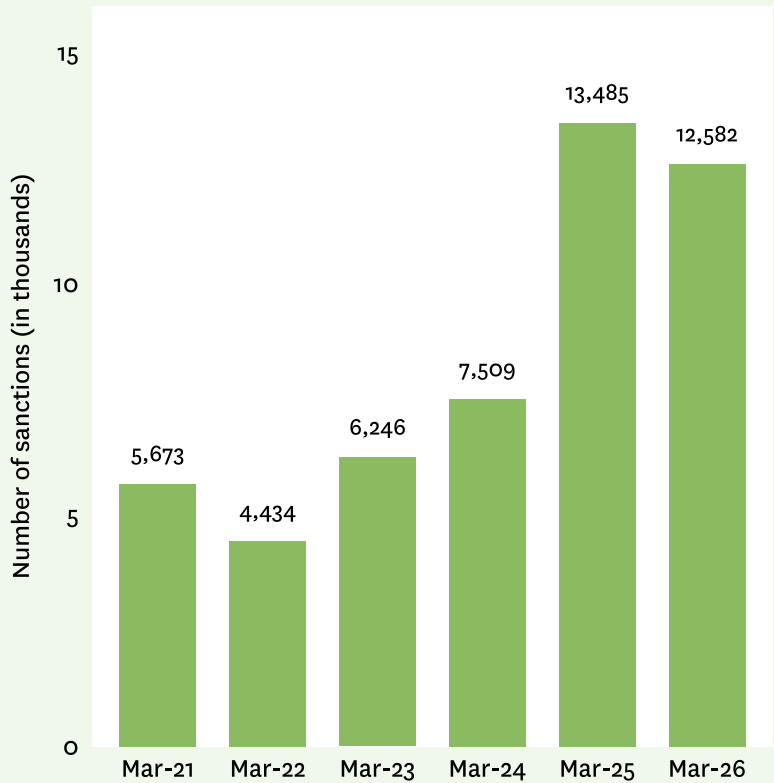
A sanction is a reduction in a person's benefit that may occur if they do not fulfil their work obligations, work prep or social obligations. Clients have 5 working days to either arrange to re-comply or dispute their failure (by either providing a good and sufficient reason for not meeting obligations or asking MSD to review the decision). Benefit recipients who have not fulfilled their obligations may have their sanctions overturned so long as they re-comply or provide additional information.

The Traffic Light System is now used to track how clients are meeting their obligations. Clients that have obligations and are meeting them are at Green, those who have failed an obligation and are in the five working day dispute period are at Orange and those with an active sanction are at Red.

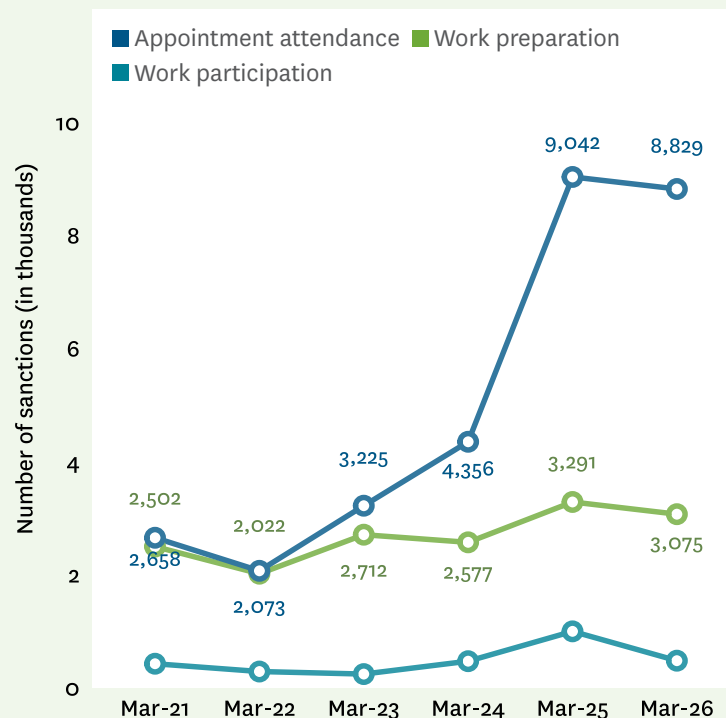
At the end of March 2026, in the Traffic Light System there were 344,142 clients at Green, 2,106 clients at Orange and 3,804 clients at Red.

Sanctions can affect benefit recipients in a number of ways, depending on their circumstances and the number of times they have had a sanction over the last 12 months. There are three types of sanctions: a reduction in benefit, suspension, or cancellation.

**Figure 9a: Number of sanctions for unfulfilled work obligations during the last six March quarters.**



**Figure 9b: Number of sanctions for unfulfilled work obligations by reason during the last six March quarters.**



# Supplementary assistance

Between the end of March 2025 and the end of March 2026:

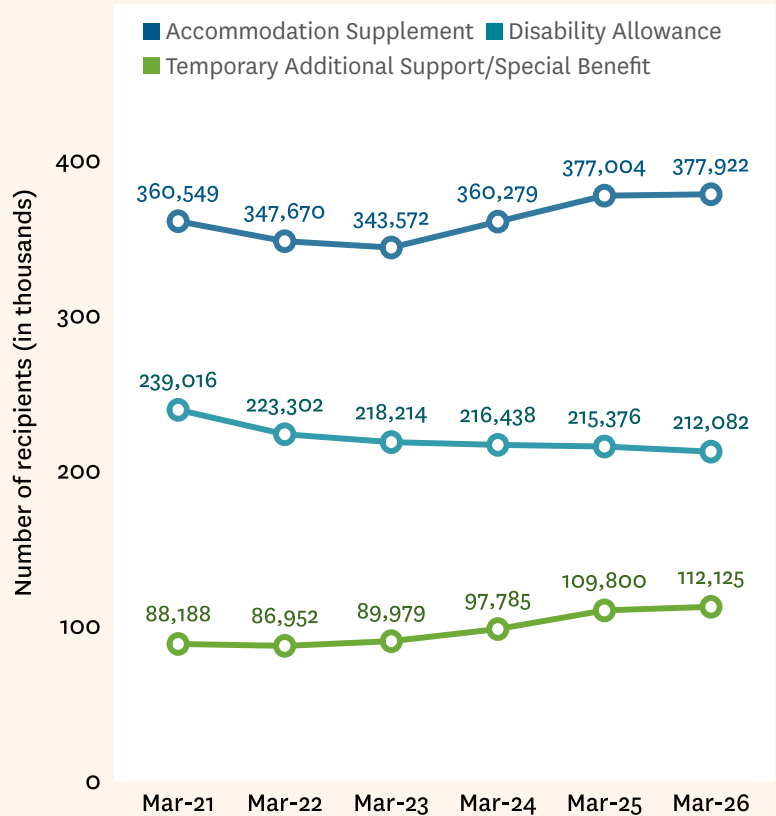
- the number of people receiving Accommodation Supplement increased by **918** or 0.2 percent
- the number of people receiving Disability Allowance decreased by **3,294** or 1.5 percent
- the number of people receiving Temporary Additional Support/Special Benefit increased by **2,325** or 2.1 percent.

The Accommodation Supplement assists people on low incomes with their rent, board, or the cost of owning a home.

The Disability Allowance assists people who have on-going costs because of a disability.

Temporary Additional Support helps people to cover essential living costs that cannot be met from their income or other resources.

Figure 10: Number of recipients of supplementary assistance at the end of the last six March quarters.



# Hardship assistance

## Total hardship assistance

During the March 2026 quarter, there were **581,133** hardship assistance payments, worth **\$177.9 million**.

Compared with the March 2025 quarter, the number of hardship assistance payments was 1.3 percent higher, and the value of hardship payments was 4.0 percent higher.

Figure 11a: Number of hardship payments provided during the quarter for the last six March quarters, by type of assistance.

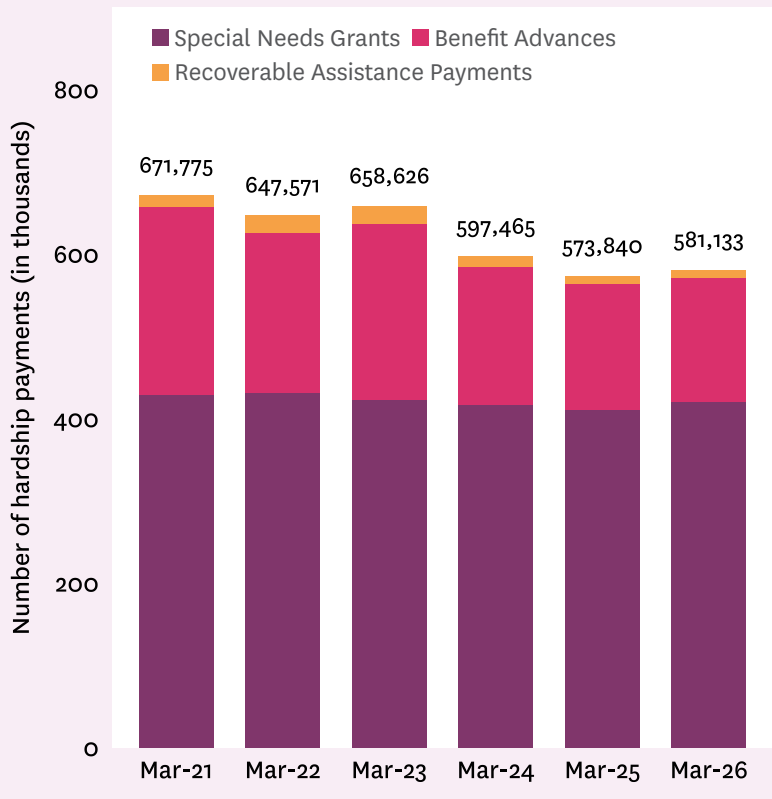
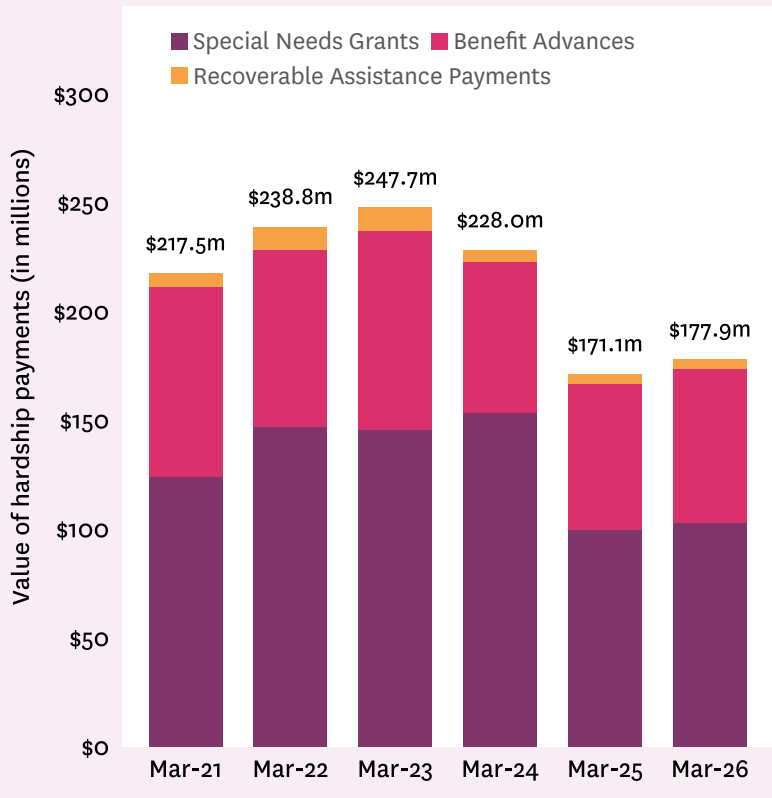


Figure 11b: Value of hardship payments provided during the quarter for the last six March quarters, by type of assistance.



Hardship assistance includes, but is not limited to: Special Needs Grants, Benefit Advances, and Recoverable Assistance Payments. These forms of assistance are designed to help people who have immediate needs.

# Reasons for hardship assistance

Two key types of hardship assistance are Special Needs Grants for food and Accommodation-related assistance.

There were **338,847** Special Needs Grants for food during the March 2026 quarter, up 8,292 or 2.5 percent from the March 2025 quarter.

The value of these grants was **\$33.6 million**, up 1.7 percent from the March 2025 quarter.

There were **4,065** Emergency Housing Special Needs Grants during the March 2026 quarter, up 423 or 11.6 percent from the March 2025 quarter. The value of these grants was **\$9.7 million**, down 4.9 percent from the March 2025 quarter.

Figure 12a: Number of Hardship provided during the last six March quarters by selected reason.

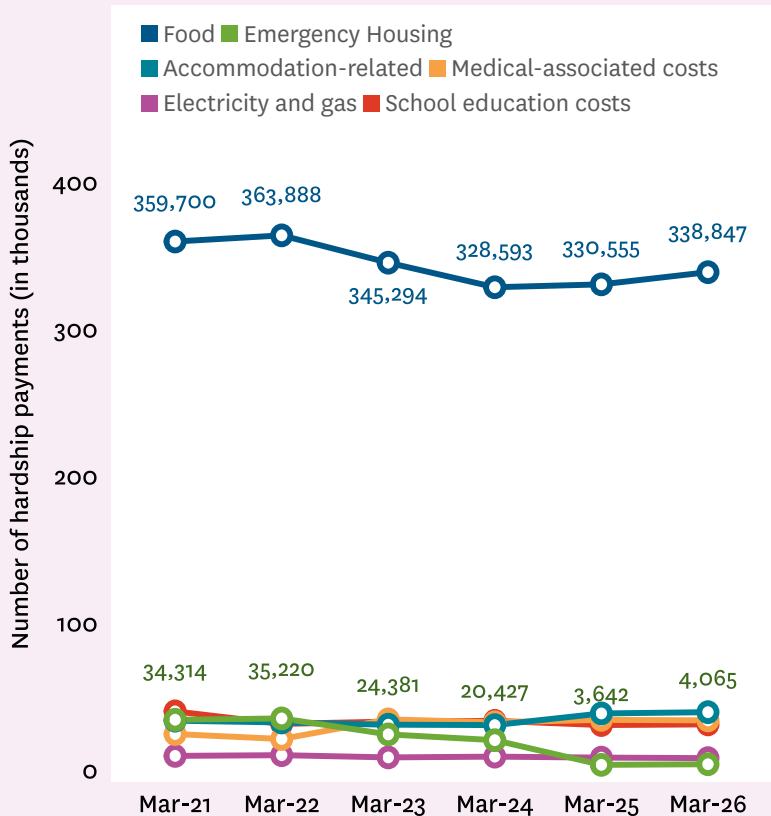
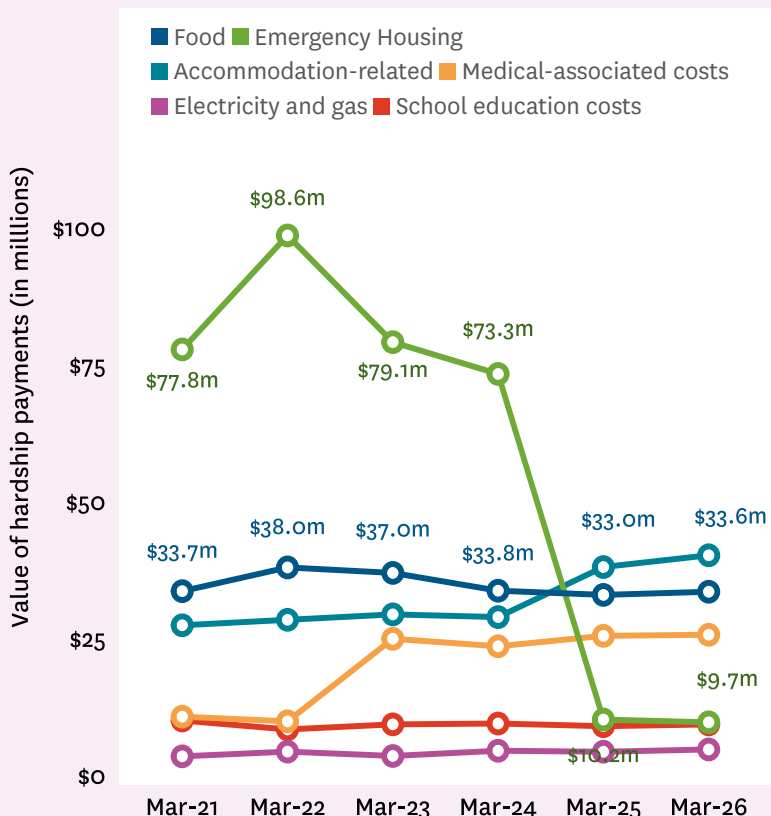


Figure 12b: Value of Special Needs Grants provided during the last six March quarters by selected reason.

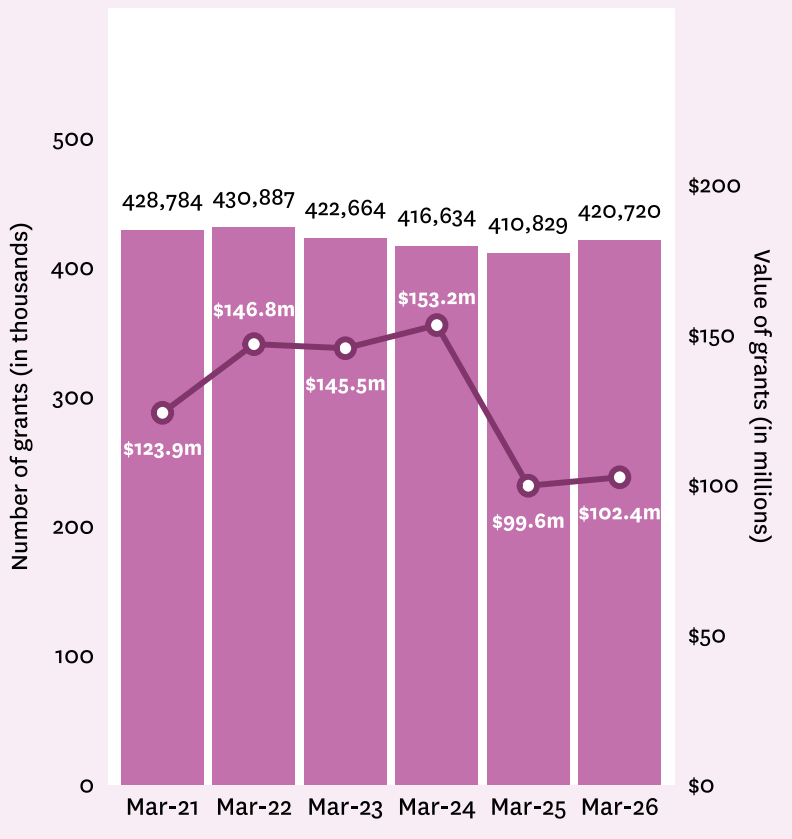


# Special Needs Grants

There were **420,720** Special Needs Grants in the March 2026 quarter, up 2.4 percent from the March 2025 quarter. The value of these grants was **\$102.4 million**, up 2.8 percent from the March 2025 quarter.

A Special Needs Grant provides a non-taxable, one-off recoverable or non-recoverable payment to help people meet immediate needs. A person does not need to be receiving a main benefit to be eligible for a Special Needs Grant.

Figure 13: Number and value of Special Needs Grants provided during the last six March quarters.



# Benefit Advances

There were **150,735** Benefit Advances provided during the March 2026 quarter, down 1.2 percent from the March 2025 quarter. The value of these grants was **\$70.9 million**, up 6.1 percent from the March 2025 quarter.

A Benefit Advance can be up to six weeks of a benefit recipient's net entitlement, and is recovered from subsequent payments of benefit. People not receiving a main benefit may instead receive Recoverable Assistance Payments.

Figure 14: Number and value of Benefit Advances provided during the last six March quarters.

