

# Benefit numbers treble for region's jobless

THE number of Nelson region workers on the unemployment benefit has more than tripled in the last year, according to figures released today.

The number has soared from 218 to 732 in the year to the end of September, says the Ministry of Social Development.

However, the region's total unemployment is higher because not all out-of-work Nelsonians claim the unemployment benefit,

or are eligible for it. The latest figure also does not include the staff being laid off with the closure of Sea Health Foods in Richmond where up to 75 production, administration and management jobs are being lost this month.

Ministry of Social Development regional commissioner Janine Dowding said the statistics reflected the challenging year but it was important to put

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Workers on the unemployment benefit

	Sept 2008	Sept 2009
Nelson	56	291
Richmond	71	237
Motueka	91	196
Stoke	0	8
Total	218	732

— Source: Ministry of Social Development

the unemployment number in perspective. While proportion-

ately the increase at the end of September was significant,

unemployment was significantly higher five years ago in a period of strong economic growth.

She said there had also been some positive aspects recently. The youth opportunities packages introduced earlier this year had helped younger jobseekers who were often the first casualties and the last to recover in an economic downturn. There were also a lot of really good employers in

Nelson-Tasman who had a strong sense of community and had taken on a good number of jobseekers despite tough times.

As of today, Work and Income had 163 job vacancies listed for the Nelson-Tasman region, 15 of which were opportunities for 16 to 24-year-olds. The department expected a higher number of vacancies to come in over the region's traditionally busy seasonal period.