

The total claims lodged since the Act came into operation in 1898 now number 55,721, including 6,587 at Auckland, 5,833 at Christchurch, 4,942 at Dunedin, and 3,421 at Wellington; 43,301 of these have been established.

Payments.—The gross expenditure on account of old-age pensions during the year totalled £460,814, an increase of £44,038 on the figures of the previous year. After deducting a credit of £23,631 from the national-endowment revenue, and refunds of pension overpaid totalling £458, and making allowance for the adjustment of outstanding payments at the beginning and close of the year, the net charge against the Consolidated Fund for the year stands at £436,765.

The grand total paid in old-age pensions to date now stands at £4,850,011, details of which, and the variation year by year, will be found in Table VIII of the appendix.

The total credit from the national-endowment revenue, being six years' contributions, is £118,786.

The cost of old-age pensions per head of the European population for the year was 8s. 4d., as against 7s. 7d. in the preceding year.

The instalments due last year and remaining unpaid on the 31st March, and now absolutely forfeited, totalled £1,640 18s. 11d.

The instalments not collected within the time allowed by law, but subsequently specially authorized and paid during the year, numbered 1,037, the amount involved being £1,982.

The number of pensioners who were inmates of mental hospitals of the Dominion during the year was 96, the amount paid to the Mental Hospitals Department on account of these totalling £1,670. The number still being maintained at the close of the year was 70. The number of pensioners residing in the various homes and hospitals of the Dominion at the close of the year was as follows: In homes, 816; in hospitals, 68. The gross amount paid to the controlling authorities of these institutions totalled £22,011, of which amount £1,817 represents the charge made for the maintenance of the hospital patients.

WIDOWS' PENSIONS.

Pensions in Force.—The number of pensioners under this head on the 31st March, including 20 Maoris, was 1,788, being an increase of 248 on the figures of the previous year, thus:—

	Europeans.	Maoris.	Total.
New grants	450	8	458
Deduct cancellations (including deaths)	207	3	210
Increase			248

The annual liability in regard to these at the close of the year was £34,975, the average pension payable being £19 11s. 2d.

The cancellations include 2 deaths. There were, however, 10 deaths during the year, the pension being continued to the guardian of the children in 8 cases. The total deaths since the Act came into operation in 1911 now number 30, and the number of guardians appointed 24.

Seventy pensioners remarried during the year, and in 65 cases the youngest child reached the age of 14.

New Claims.—The claims lodged during the year numbered 539, being an increase of 39 on the figures of the previous year. These, with the 81 awaiting investigation at the close of the preceding year, made a total of 620 dealt with, which were accounted for as follows:—

Granted	458
Rejected (including withdrawals)	73
Awaiting investigation on the 31st March	89
Total	620

Of the new pensioners, 446 were British-born, including 283 New-Zealanders; 8 were Maoris; and the remaining 4 of foreign extraction. Thirty-four had been previously on the roll.

The ages of the new pensioners varied from 19 to 59, the ages claiming the greatest number being 35 and 39, although for all pensioners age 44 heads the list.

The total claims lodged now number 2,904, including 421 at Auckland, 354 at Christchurch, 320 at Dunedin, and 286 at Wellington. 2,327 of these have been established, 76 per cent. being still on the roll.

Of the 73 rejected claims, 27 were not established on account of excess of income and property. In 7 cases the children were born out of New Zealand.

The total families of the new pensioners ranged from 1 to 15, and the number of children under 14 in one family from 1 to 10, the average being: Total family, 4.3 (last year 4.4); family under 14, 2.5 (last year 2.5). Details will be found in the appendix. The total number of children on whose account the pension has now been granted to date is 5,775, the total children of all pensioners to date being 11,150, thus:—

Year	Pensions granted.	Children under Fourteen.	Total Children.
Year 1911-12	791	1,923	3,992
„ 1912-13	657	1,604	3,295
„ 1913-14	421	1,090	1,868
„ 1914-15	458	1,158	1,995
Totals	2,327	5,775	11,150