

2. Wages and Conditions

The wages of women workers are contained in legally enforceable documents called Awards or Agreements.

Many conditions which regulate the way in which you are required to work, such as the hours you work, your classification, your leave entitlements, the allowances available to you are also contained in Awards or Agreements.

Other conditions may be contained in departmental policy, state/territory government rules, regulations or directions.

There are also other conditions which may not be formally regulated or written down but which you enjoy due to the notion of 'custom and practice'. An example may be having a paid morning tea break. It may not be provided for anywhere, but because your workplace or all education workers routinely have a short morning tea break, it has evolved as a condition of employment.

Enterprise Bargaining

Your wage rates and those conditions of employment contained in Awards and Agreements are determined through the enterprise bargaining process. This process is usually commenced by your Union through the development of a document called a 'log of claims'. This document contains the wish list of members for salary and conditions improvements. The log of claims is developed in consultation with members. The document is served on the employer (the government) who then develops their own wish list. The next step is the commencement of negotiations.

The negotiation phase can be lengthy depending on how close the parties are on the matters being discussed. The outcome of negotiations may need to be enforced by the Industrial Relations Commission if the parties are unable to reach consensus.

The end of the enterprise bargaining phase is the certification of the Award or Agreement in the Industrial Relations Commission. Once the document is certified, it becomes legally enforceable.

Enforcement of Your Rights

Whether your conditions and wages are contained in Awards, Agreements or other documents, if there is a breach there are mechanisms for addressing the breach.

- It is important to try and be familiar with what your current entitlements are, so you can ensure that you are receiving them.
- Secondly, it is important to be aware of the appropriate process (or who to contact) when a breach occurs. The contact person may be your Workplace Rep or Union Organiser.



What Can I Do?

Activism around Wages and Conditions

- Have access to copies of the latest awards/agreements and ensure other women know how to access them
- Attend training/information sessions to learn about your entitlements
- Talk to your workplace rep if you have a query
- Get involved in the consultation phase of the enterprise bargaining process. It is REALLY important to make sure that issues affecting women workers who are 70% of the membership, are on the agenda and an integral part of the negotiations
- Keep up to date with developments in the bargaining process and make sure that the issues put on the agenda by women STAY on the agenda

