



**7 What is an arbitration and how does it relate to my wages and working conditions?**

When we try to negotiate a new collective agreement (or EB) to improve wages and working conditions sometimes we can't reach agreement between all of us (the union of workers) and the employer.

Under the Industrial Relations Act there are ways that the 'independent umpire', the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission (QIRC), can then help the parties make an agreement, or, they can just 'determine' one.

Arbitration is the process where the QIRC makes a new agreement about wages and conditions for the parties by issuing a decision after a trial-like process. Three Commissioners form a "Full Bench" and sit in judgement while we make submissions and present witnesses in a process similar to a trial. At the end of the process the Commission issues a 'determination' that is the new collective agreement.

Arbitration takes months to complete and is a process that allows both parties to run our arguments in front of the independent Commissioners when negotiations fail. Given the overwhelming member rejection of the last offer from the state government, this process is a good way to see an outcome for workers. Having independent Commissioners then make a decision, based on evidence and arguments, is an important next step in improving your wages and conditions.