

# Calls to end the restraining of prisoners receiving palliative care

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There are urgent calls to abandon the restraining of prisoners receiving palliative care, with the ongoing practice blamed on the Australian justice and health systems colliding.

Prisoners receiving palliative care in Australia, either in a hospital or a palliative care unit, may still be subject to prison policies regarding

restraint even though care is being provided outside of a prison environment, experts say.

"Health care professionals involved in caring for hospitalized prisoner patients [have] described a 'seemingly opaque system' around the protocols and points of contact for removing shackles," wrote Lara Pemberton from the Biomedicine Discovery Institute at Monash University and colleagues in a Perspective, [published](#) in the *Medical Journal of Australia* today.

The processes for getting the shackles removed from a restrained prisoner is also "time-consuming and deliberative—time that a dying person may not have," Pemberton wrote.

In some jurisdictions in Australia, health care staff must follow formal pathways "to request a review of a patient's risk assessment."

While [palliative care](#) for prisoners is in the spotlight this week, there are again calls for [prisoners](#) to no longer be excluded from Medicare and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) subsidies.

**More information:** Lara Pemberton et al, Call to end shackling of hospitalised palliative prisoner patients, *Medical Journal of Australia* (2024). [DOI: 10.5694/mja2.52240](https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.52240)

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