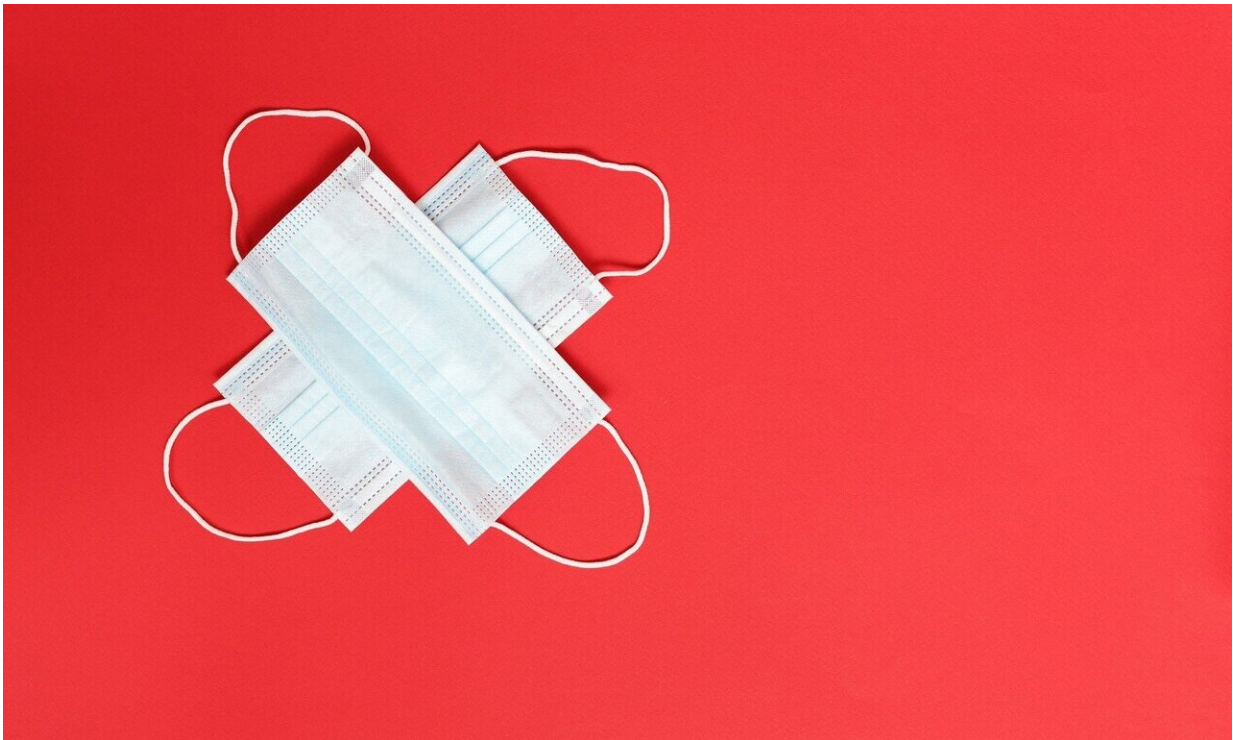


Fears of second virus wave in Australia's second city

June 22 2020



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Australians were warned Monday to avoid travelling to Melbourne, as the country's second biggest city tightened coronavirus restrictions amid fears of a second wave of the epidemic.

Victoria state has recorded more than 110 cases in the past week—many

of them in Melbourne—prompting leaders of other regions to warn against visiting the city's six designated virus "hot spots".

The premier of neighbouring New South Wales state, Gladys Berejiklian, said anyone intending to visit the city should "reconsider your plans".

"At this stage, the advice is do not travel to those [hot spots](#)," she told reporters in Sydney, which had been the epicentre of Australia's COVID-19 outbreak but has seen few new cases in recent weeks.

"We would recommend people not at this stage travel to Melbourne unless they have to," she said.

Officials in Victoria have stalled plans to allow increased numbers of diners in restaurants and cafes, and also reimposed tighter rules on gatherings in homes in response to the outbreak.

It was the first major back-pedal on easing restrictions, as the rest of the country continues to record low numbers of new cases and work to restart the economy.

Although numbers remain relatively low in Melbourne, a spike in the rate of community transmission—those cases which authorities are unable to trace to the source—has fuelled concerns it could get out of hand quickly.

The state's chief health officer, Brett Sutton, has blamed the rise on lockdown fatigue and complacency, saying the situation had now reached a "dangerous point" as there was "no Plan B".

"We are absolutely at risk of a second peak but we can get on top of it, and we must get on top of it," he told reporters Saturday.

Like the rest of the country, early restrictions on travel and gatherings successfully curbed the virus in Melbourne before last week.

The new clusters have emerged at Melbourne's Stamford Plaza Hotel, which is being used to quarantine citizens returning from overseas, an H&M clothing store in the city's north and within extended families in a couple of suburbs.

An Australian Rules football game in the city also had to be postponed after a player tested positive on the weekend.

Australia has recorded almost 7,500 cases of COVID-19 and 102 deaths, though some regions have already declared themselves virus-free.

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