

# **Australian city Melbourne begins 3rd lockdown due to cluster**

February 12 2021

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Romania's Sorana Cirstea walks from the court after he third round loss to Marketa Vondrousova of the Czech Republic at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, Friday, Feb. 12, 2021.(AP Photo/Andy Brownbill)

Melbourne, Australia's second-largest city, will begin its third lockdown on Friday due to a rapidly spreading COVID-19 cluster centered on hotel quarantine.

The five-day [lockdown](#) will be enforced across Victoria state to prevent the virus spreading from the state capital, Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews said.

The Australian Open tennis tournament will be allowed to continue but without spectators, he said.

Only international flights that were already in the air when the lockdown was announced will be allowed to land at Melbourne Airport. Schools and many businesses will be closed. Residents are ordered to stay at home except to exercise and for essential purposes.

A population of 6.5 million will be locked down from 11:59 p.m. until the same time on Wednesday because of a contagious British variant of the virus first detected at a Melbourne Airport hotel that has infected 13 people.

Andrews said the rate of spread demanded drastic action to avoid a new surge in Melbourne.

"The game has changed. This thing is not the 2020 virus. It is very different. It is much faster. It spreads much more easily," Andrews told reporters. "I am confident that this short, sharp circuit breaker will be effective. We will be able to smother this."



Spectators watch the third round match between United States' Serena Williams and Russia's Anastasia Potapova at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, Friday, Feb. 12, 2021.(AP Photo/Andy Brownbill)

Melbourne emerged from a 111-day lockdown in October following a fresh wave of infections that peaked at 725 cases a day. It was largely blamed on lax infection control procedures at two Melbourne hotels where international travelers were required to quarantine for 14 days.

At the time, the rest of Australia was relaxing restrictions due to low case numbers after an initial nationwide lockdown.

Some Australian states have imposed border restrictions on travelers from Melbourne. Federal lawmakers were on Friday rushing to get to the national capital Canberra to attend Parliament on Monday for fear that the Australian Capital Territory government will restrict their entry.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Health Minister Greg Hunt were in Melbourne to inspect biotechnology company CSL Ltd.'s plant where a local version of the AstraZeneca vaccine is being manufactured.



Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews addresses the media during a press conference in Melbourne, Friday, Feb. 12, 2021. Andrews said that Melbourne, Australia's second-largest city, will begin its third lockdown on Friday due to a rapidly spreading COVID-19 cluster centered on hotel quarantine. (Luis Ascui/AAP Image via AP)

Morrison said before the lockdown was announced that he was confident the [state government](#) could handle the cluster.

"I wouldn't be here if I wasn't confident," Morrison told reporters. "I've just flown down from Sydney today. That's why I'm here. Business as usual for me being in Melbourne here today."

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