Sydney tightens lockdown as Delta outbreak intensifies

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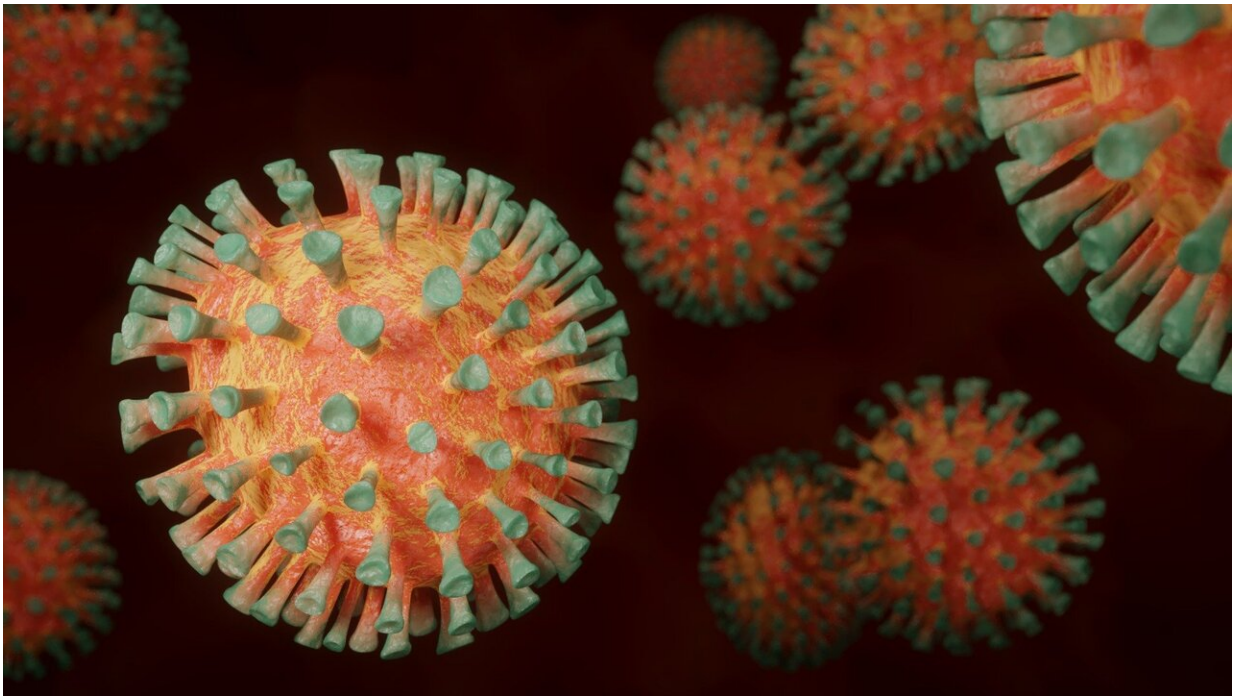

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A lockdown in Australia's largest city was tightened Friday, as new COVID-19 infections hit a record and authorities warned an outbreak of the Delta variant was spinning out of control.

"Do not leave your home unless you absolutely have to," state premier Gladys Berejiklian told Sydney's five million residents, as the city

recorded 44 new cases in 24 hours.

Sydney is now in its third week of lockdown, but continues to post record new infections among a population that is overwhelmingly unvaccinated.

Berejiklian tried to shock New South Wales residents into compliance, warning they were facing the greatest threat to their safety "since the pandemic started", following a lack of adherence to stay-at-home rules.

Sydney has seen 439 new infections since mid-June.

That number is low compared to most global cities, but Australia has so far prevented widespread community transmission and just nine percent of the population are fully vaccinated.

"We do not have the luxury of considering living with this virus," Berejiklian warned, adding residents "need to turn the tide" if thousands of deaths are to be avoided.

Under the new lockdown rules, outdoor exercise in groups of more than two will be banned and existing bans on non-essential trips will be more strictly enforced.

"What we need is for everyone to follow the rules that are in place," said Berejiklian. "This strain, the Delta strain, is more contagious than anything we have seen."

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