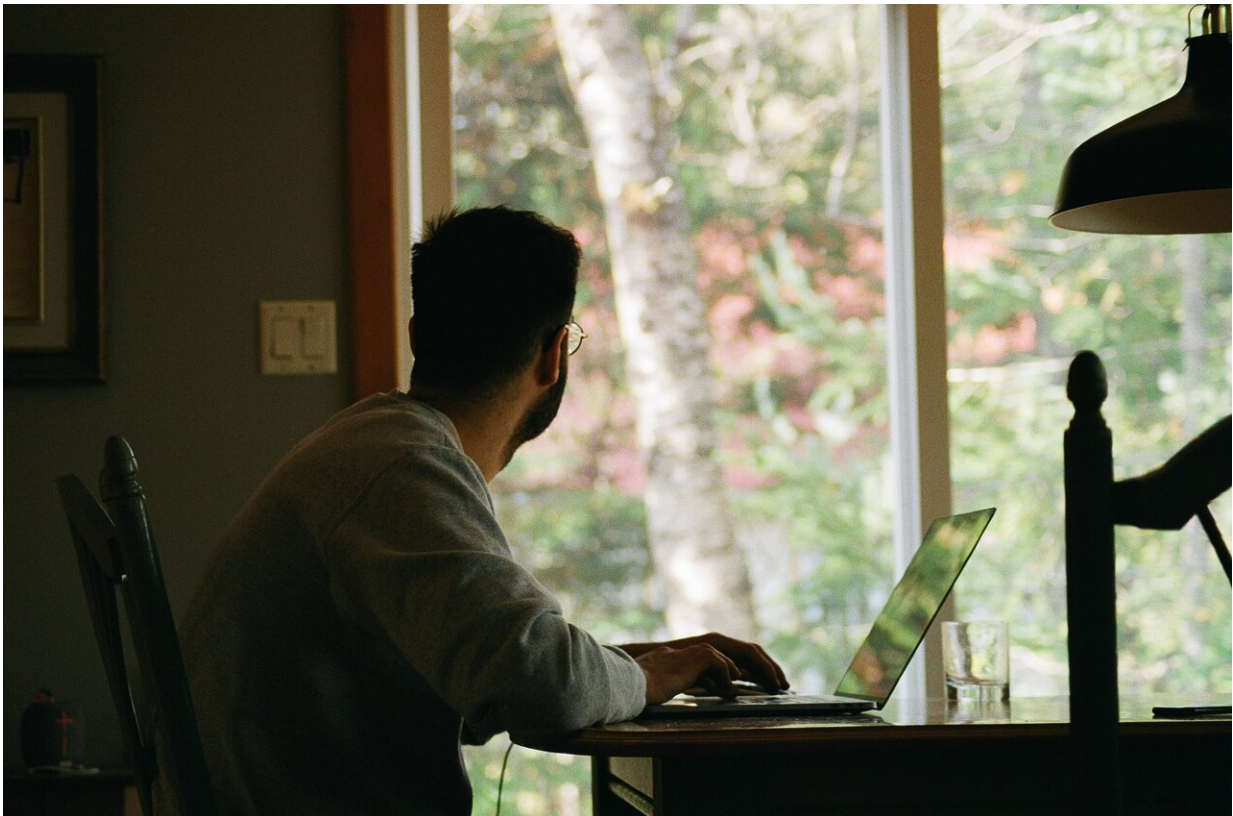


Australia's Melbourne extends sixth virus lockdown

August 29 2021



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A lockdown of Australia's second-biggest city Melbourne will be extended, authorities announced Sunday as they struggle to quash a stubborn coronavirus Delta variant outbreak.

Almost seven million people in Melbourne and surrounding Victoria state were scheduled to exit a four-week [lockdown](#) on Thursday, but state premier Dan Andrews said it would no longer be possible with case numbers rising by 92 overnight.

It is the city's sixth lockdown of the pandemic, and includes a curfew, the closure of playgrounds and strict limits on exercise.

"We still have too many cases in the community for too long for us to be able to open up and give back... those freedoms that we cherish and those freedoms that we desperately want back," Andrews said.

Andrews did not reveal how long stay-at-home orders would remain in place, saying officials would "look at all the different options".

Meanwhile neighbouring New South Wales state, which includes Australia's most populous city of Sydney, posted 1,218 new cases on Sunday—pushing the country's overall daily caseload to a fresh all-time high.

Almost 19,000 cases have been detected in the state of about eight million people since the Delta variant outbreak began in mid-June.

But with [vaccination rates](#) now surging in New South Wales and authorities predicting 70 percent of adults there will be fully vaccinated by October, residents weary of prolonged restrictions have been promised some modest freedoms.

In non-hotspot areas, five fully vaccinated adults will be able to gather outside for up to an hour from mid-September while authorities have also signalled small weddings will soon be allowed.

Australian leaders have agreed on a national roadmap for reopening the

country once vaccination targets of 70 and 80 percent are reached in each state and territory.

The nation has recorded more than 51,000 cases of COVID-19 and almost 1,000 deaths in a population of 25 million since the start of the pandemic.

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