

# Australia sees another jump in virus cases, hospitalizations

January 5 2022

---



People queue at a walk-in COVID-19 testing site in Melbourne, Australia Wednesday, Jan. 5, 2022. Australia on Wednesday saw sharply rising COVID-19 case numbers and hospitalizations and long queues at testing centers as it continued to battle the rapid spread of the virus in most states. Credit: Joel Carrett/AAP Image

Australia on Wednesday saw another jump in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations and long queues at testing centers as it continued to battle the rapid spread of the virus in most states.

The country recorded more than 64,000 cases, up from 47,000 a day earlier, and Prime Minister Scott Morrison met virtually with the national cabinet—the leaders of Australia's states and territories—to discuss how to respond to almost daily records in new cases and rising pressure on hospitals.

Morrison has faced increasing calls to make rapid antigen tests available free to relieve pressure on PCR testing centers, many of which have been forced to close after reaching capacity. People who have been tested often face long waits for results from overburdened laboratories.

Speaking to reporters after the national cabinet meeting, Morrison said state premiers and first ministers opposed universal free tests. But more than 6 million Australians including seniors and others on welfare or with low incomes will be eligible for up to 10 free tests every three months. Free tests also are available to those who have symptoms or are deemed close contacts.

Among other measures to alleviate pressure on PCR testing centers, Morrison said those who return a positive rapid antigen [test](#) no longer need to have a PCR test to confirm the result.

New South Wales, the country's most populous state, saw a record 35,054 new cases on Wednesday as it awaits the arrival of 50 million rapid antigen tests ordered by the state government.

State Premier Dominic Perrottet urged residents not to seek PCR tests unless necessary, adding that the arrival of the rapid testing kits expected next week would "significantly assist."

Victoria reported 17,636 cases, a state record, and Queensland saw 6,871 cases.

The case numbers do not necessarily reflect the true spread of the virus as they only count the number of recorded cases.

Hospitalizations nationwide stood at 2,990 on Wednesday, with 196 patients in intensive care. Both numbers were higher than the previous day, when 2,684 hospitalizations were recorded, with 183 people in [intensive care](#).

Morrison said Australia is not alone in experiencing shortages of rapid antigen tests because of supply problems caused by the spread of omicron worldwide. He said around 200 million rapid antigen tests are on their way to Australia but until they arrive "tension" will continue in the testing system.

"We are not on our own in dealing with this. Other countries, most countries around the world, are dealing with exactly the same problems," Morrison said.

© 2022 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: Australia sees another jump in virus cases, hospitalizations (2022, January 5) retrieved 4 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-01-australia-virus-cases-hospitalizations.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--