

Australia suffers deadliest day of pandemic amid rise in Omicron cases

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Spectators watch first-round matches at the Australian Open tennis championships in Melbourne, Australia, on Monday. Associated Press/Hamish Blair

Sydney, January 20 (RHC)-- Australia has recorded its highest number of fatalities from COVID-19 amid the rise in cases of the Omicron variant across the country. Health officials recorded a total of 77 deaths on Tuesday. The latest deaths brought the total fatalities since the start of the pandemic in Australia to 2,776.

Some 73,000 new infections were also reported on Tuesday. "Today, is a very difficult day for our state," said New South Wales (NSW) Premier Dominic Perrottet, whose state reported 36 deaths.

According to official data, only four of those who died in NSW had received their booster shot. "There needs to be a sense of urgency in embracing the booster doses," the state's Chief Health Officer Kerry Chant said. "For omicron, we know that the protection is lower and we need that next boosting to get that higher level of protection."

The country reported its first confirmed death from Omicron last month. The death was reported just as the authorities lifted restrictions on most domestic borders and allowed Australians to return from overseas without mandatory quarantine.

The countrywide tally of COVID-19 infections in Australia has reached 1.6 million, of which around 1.3 million were registered in the last two weeks.

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