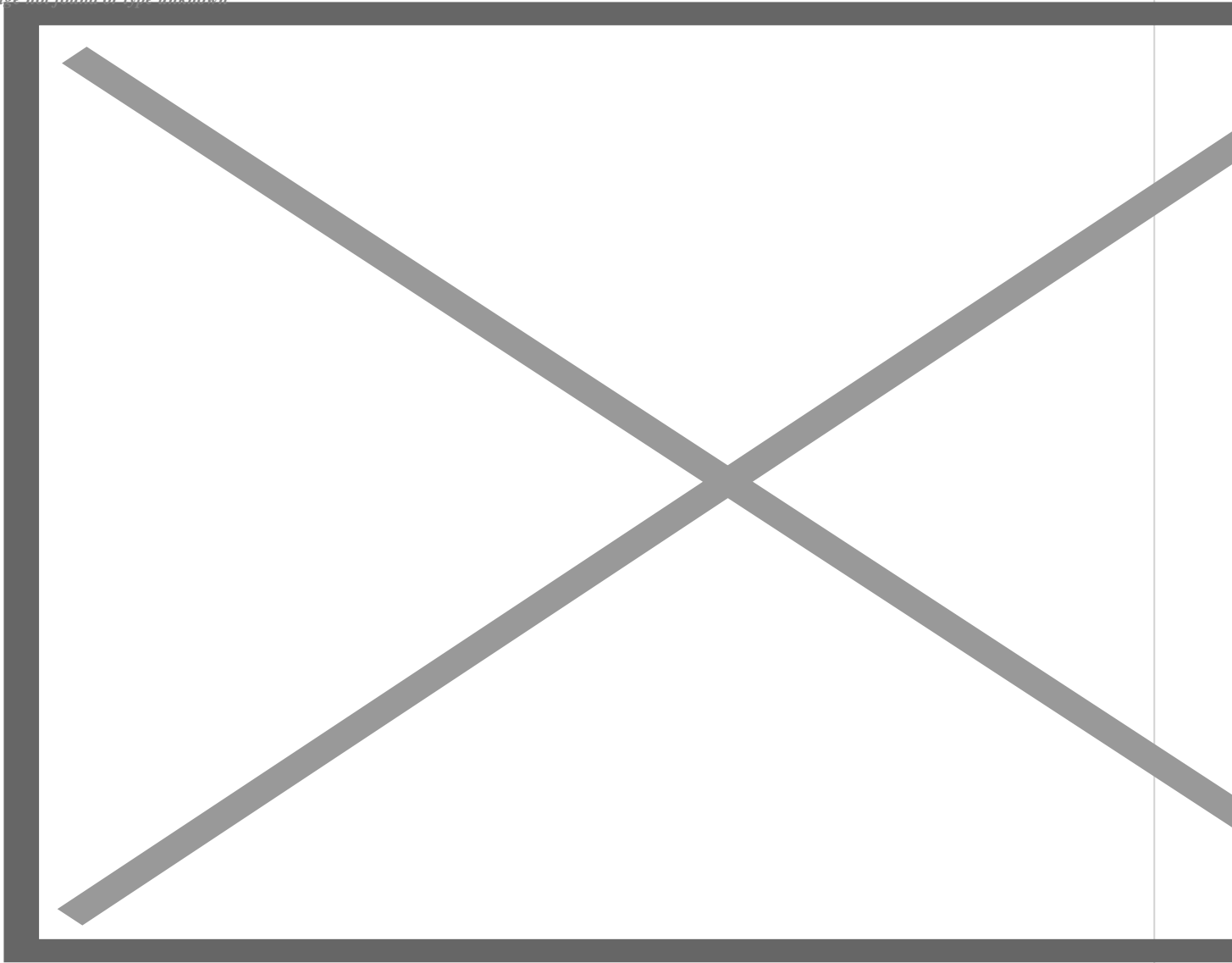


Sydney, Australia imposes new COVID curbs

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Wearing of masks on public transportation in metropolitan Sydney will remain in place for at least two more weeks [Saeed Khan/AFP]

Sydney, June 24 (RHC)-- People in Sydney, Australia's biggest city, have been ordered not to leave the metropolitan area, as authorities scramble to contain a number of new coronavirus cases of the Delta variant – a development that has prompted neighbouring New Zealand to raise its alert level following possible exposure from a tourist from Australia.

New South Wales (NSW) State Premier Gladys Berejikian announced the stricter curbs – affecting about five million people who live and work in the city – on Wednesday. “Clearly this is an evolving situation,” Berejikian said at a news conference.

NSW health minister Brad Hazzard described the situation as “a very real and present danger” for the city as a cluster first identified in the beach suburb of Bondi grew to 21 cases with eight confirmed on Wednesday morning. Most of the newly confirmed cases were traced to a single event, where a mass gathering was held on Tuesday.

The new restrictions include a limit on household visitors to five people, including children, Berejikian said. Mask wearing, which had already been reinstated on Friday, will be extended with people required to wear masks in all indoor settings outside the home and at organised outdoor events. The measures also include capacity limits on public transport and in gym classes, while singing at indoor venues, including places of worship, will not be allowed.

Authorities are also urging people to come forward for testing. “If we adhere to the health orders today, we will have a good chance on getting on top of this outbreak,” Berejikian told reporters.

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