

Australia's COVID cases at record high with millions in lockdown

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With about 15 million people in the three states, or 60 percent of Australia's population, under a strict lockdown, the country also reported five coronavirus-related deaths, one of the highest tolls this year [Saeed Khan/AFP]

Sydney, August 7 (RHC)-- Australia has reported a record daily number of new coronavirus cases for the year on Saturday with the highly infectious Delta variant continuing to spread through the country's most populous states of New South Wales (NSW), Victoria and Queensland.

With about 15 million people in the three states, or 60 percent of Australia's population, under a strict lockdown, the country also reported five coronavirus-related deaths, one of the highest tolls this year.

NSW reported 319 new locally acquired COVID-19 cases, the most since the start of the pandemic in early 2020, with Sydney and neighbouring regional centres spanning 200km (120 miles) of coastline under a stay-at-home order for six weeks already.

There are 345 people in hospital in NSW, with 56 in intensive care and 23 on ventilators, state authorities said. With the virus continuing to spread through Sydney's sprawling suburbs, state Health Minister Brad Hazzard expressed frustration that people appeared to be ignoring restrictions and urged residents to stay at home.

"That is the biggest thing you can do for all of us and for yourself, to make sure that we beat this Delta virus that is wreaking havoc across the world," Hazzard told media.

Neighbouring Victoria saw the highest daily jump in cases this year, with 29 new infections, as the state remains under a snap seven-day lockdown imposed earlier this week, the state's sixth since the start of the pandemic.

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