

Haircuts and golf in Melbourne as virus curbs ease

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Residents of Australia's second-biggest city flocked to salons and golf courses Monday as some stay-at-home restrictions were eased after coronavirus infection rates fell.

Melbourne's five million people had been barred from leaving their homes with a few exceptions—including shopping for essentials, exercising, or going to work—for three months.

They still face a litany of travel restrictions and tough-to-remember rules for even the most mundane activities, but will now be able to get a much-needed haircut and do more outdoor socially distanced activities.

"We're already fully booked until December," salon owner Daniel Choi told AFP.

"From yesterday, there are so many messages for me: 'I want a haircut'. They want to change their style."

Salon owners still have to contend with restrictions on the number of people allowed on the premises

at the same time, meaning those eager to correct self-inflicted dye jobs or improvised trims could face a long wait.

But for the lucky first customers there was a sense of elation.

"It's a sense of relief actually that finally I could get it done," said customer Karen Ng.

"It's nice actually to have some normality."

Golfers can also tee it up again, although they will have to go around in groups of two and, according to Golf Australia, "masks must still be worn when playing".

"It's a great sight... GOLFERS ON COURSE!" Green Acres Golf Club tweeted.

But many restrictions remain in place in the city.

Masks are mandatory, restaurants are limited to takeaways and deliveries, non-essential shops have to remain closed and there is a ban on travel outside the greater Melbourne area or more than 25 kilometres (16 miles) from home.

The city's second round of stay-at-home restrictions began in July, when the state of Victoria saw around 190 new cases a day, rising to 700 in August.

Victoria recorded just four new cases on Monday.

But not everyone was happy with the limited easing, including Australia's conservative treasurer Josh Frydenberg, who criticised the regional authorities for not going further.

"It's time for [small businesses](#) to reopen" he said, accusing Victoria's centre-left government of "callous indifference" to job losses in the wake of the pandemic.

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