



# STUART GRIMLEY MP

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## MEDIA RELEASE



Monday 22 June, 2020

### OPINION PIECE

## The Overland Must Be Protected

Rail is vital for rural and regional towns. Properly funded rail services whether they be passenger or freight, are of economic and social importance to not only these towns but their domestic and international markets in the case of freight.

In my recent travels around Western Victoria, rail has been a central theme of every conversation. When I say every, I mean every. In some parts of country Victoria, trains have only met 0.6% of time targets. No, that's not a typo.

People in country Victoria feel short-changed. They see huge investments in the Melbourne metro tunnel project coinciding with cost blowouts at the Westgate tunnel project, countless level crossing removals and forwarding planning on the suburban rail loop.

No one argues these projects are not of significant importance, but we must be conscious of striking a better balance between funding for metropolitan and rural rail projects.

We face the ludicrous situation of cost blowouts on the suburban rail loop and Metro Tunnel project in the order of *billions* of taxpayers' funds, but Victoria cannot find the 'spare change' needed to keep essential rail services going.

One key concern I had raised with me, was the future of The Overland rail service which travels between Victoria and South Australia. I enjoyed going to the Nhill station and meeting with the enthusiastic locals earlier this year, about the future of the service, but it was at a disappointing time when funding was about to dry up.

Despite my lobbying inside and outside of Parliament, The Overland is ultimately a political football which is being neglected by the South Australian Liberal Government and the Victorian Labor Government.

It's just not good enough and we need The Overland to be protected.

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