

SATURDAY DECEMBER 28, 2019

CONFIRMED! THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT IS EXTENDING FUNDING FOR THE OVERLAND TRAIN SERVICE - BUT THE TRACK ISN'T QUITE CLEAR YET!



Our exclusive tip-off last week that the Andrews Government would extend funding to keep The Overland running until March 2020 was confirmed (Friday December 27) by the Victorian Government.

But unlike the 12 months just past where the Vics funded the service for the year in the absence of the SA Govt stumping up the paltry \$300,000 (per annum) subsidy to keep the service running, the Vics this time around are offering only a 3-month lifeline.

The announcement was first reported by ABC Wimmera late on Friday December 27.

On its Facebook page, ABC Wimmera reported:

The Victorian Government says it's offered to extend its support for the passenger rail service between Melbourne and Adelaide for three months as uncertainty continues surrounding its future.

The government continued to subsidise Great Southern Rail's operation of the Overland after South Australia axed its financial contribution but the current deal runs out after Tuesday.

"To give holidaymakers certainty, the Victorian Government has offered to extend the Overland train until the end of March 2020," a spokesman for the Andrews Government said today.

"Given the South Australian Liberal Government's cut to the service, Victoria will use the next three months to continue discussions with Journey Beyond about the future of the Overland.

"This gives the South Australian Liberal Government three months to reassess its cut in funding for the service — which is primarily used by South Australians."

SARRA's Convenor Paul Henley welcomed and congratulated the Victorian Government for its persistence in trying to keep The Overland running - and utterly condemned the South Australian Government for not, again, meeting its commitments to a vital public transport and tourism service between two of Australia's most important Capital cities.

"That the Marshall Government cannot find a mere \$300,000 - at a time when it has invested millions of dollars into the increasingly struggling horse racing industry (as just one example of its pandering to its 'big industry' mates) is unconscionable.

"On the day of this announcement, SA Transport Minister Stephen Knoll was quoted as saying that fewer people were using The Overland' and as a result, his Government could not see a reason to continue its funding.

“But we ask: Why is that?”

“It’s because his Government, led by his dead-weight Department DPTI, HAVE DONE NOTHING to bring the service into the 21st Century by insisting the Operator (GSR/Journey Beyond) schedule daily services travelling overnight to deliver passengers into both cities by early morning, then offering reciprocal night services - so that users of the service need not waste days (as it is under the present scheduling) waiting for a return service later in each week.

“We say again: It is the SA Government’s responsibility to meet the needs of ALL OF ITS ELECTORS - in this case, those who cannot or do not want to take air flights or cramped bus services between the capital cities for health or other reasons, and those who quite frankly want to travel by train. This particularly applies to tourists and backpackers who enjoy travelling by train.

“Properly promoted, The Overland can again become a highly patronised and value-added means of travelling between Melbourne and Adelaide.

“What is it that Transport Minister Stephan Knoll and the blinkered mandarins in DPTI and SA Tourism just doesn’t get?

“DPTI and Tourism SA should be sitting down right now and working on scheduling and promotional activities to grow The Overland services!

“The Victorian Labor Government has, remarkably, thrown the SA Liberal Government a political lifeline.

“IF Knoll doesn’t see the sense of paying SA’s way, he stands condemned – and he can look forward to returning to picking meat off of pigs’ heads as he has boasted he did as part of his upbringing, when the Liberals get turfed out at the 2021 State Election,” Mr Henley said.

“We urge SARRA supporters to get on the phone, ring Knoll’s office, ring the Premier’s office, send them emails - and condemn their abandonment of the iconic Overland service, and spread the word amongst your friends and acquaintances, to ROLL KNOLL AT THE NEXT STATE POLL,” Mr Henley said.
