

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 614#

CHARTER, “FOR PROFIT” SCHOOLS CAN

NEVER BE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OR ADVANCE THE COMMON GOOD.

Profiteers are not satisfied with making profits out of the child-care, religious, TAFE and university sector. They are knocking at the door of Australia’s public primary and secondary systems. Not only is David Leyonhjelm, Liberal Democrats senator for NSW, wanting to introduce [for-profit schools in Australia](#).

The right wing think tank, the *Centre for Independent Studies* in a Report entitled: ‘Free to Choose Charter Schools: How Charter and For-Profit Schools can boost Public Education’, is arguing that US - style privately-owned charter schools should be rolled out in Australia. Such schools are funded by the government and run by private entities. They have full autonomy over the school finances, staffing and curriculum. <http://www.cis.org.au/pdf/rr6.pdf>. To label them ‘public’ schools is mischievous and misleading.

‘Public’ is exactly what charter and for-profit schools are not. **Public schools must be public in purpose and outcome; public in access; public in ownership and control; public in funding and accountability; and public in provision i.e. provided by a democratic government.** Charter schools, like all private and religious schools, fulfil only one of these requirements – they are public in funding. Like all private schools they are given access to the public Treasury so that they can profiteer at public expense with minimal, or no accountability

The response in *The Age* on 30 August to the report by the Victorian government and unions latched on to the issue of ‘autonomy’ of schools, with reference to the isolation and abandonment of public schools by the previous government, and the Pyne ‘independent’ public school initiative. : <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/charter-schools-would-boost-grades-in-australia-new-report-20150830-gjb5f2.html#ixzz3kck7SthR>

In Victoria, the systematic decentralisation of the public system and romancing about ‘autonomy’ and ‘privatisation’ has laid our proud public systems open to capture by powerful, profiteering, religious interests. Since the 1970s and the introduction of State Aid to private schools, we have lost sight of the common good and the education of **all** Australian children.

Trevor Cobbold from *Save our Schools* at <http://www.saveourschools.com.au/choice-and-competition/for-profit-schools-have-a-bad-record> has already produced research to counteract the so-called research being produced by think tanks attempting to high jack our public systems for profiteering on the backs of public school parents and children. He points out that

For-profit Schools Have a Bad Record

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For-profit charter schools in the United States have no better results than traditional public schools or non-profit charter schools. In particular, for-profit cyber schools in the US have been disastrous with much lower results than traditional public schools.

For-profit schools in Sweden have failed to improve student results – indeed, they have a major factor in the decline in Sweden’s school results over the last 15 years. There is no robust evidence that for-profit schools generate educational improvements.

Many for-profit schools have gone bankrupt, leaving their students in limbo. For example, last year, the biggest for-profit school provider in Sweden, JB Education, collapsed leaving massive debts and its students having to find other schools in the middle of their courses.

The collapse of for-profit higher education and vocational education companies in the US and Australia provides a salutary lesson about resorting to for-profit education. Corinthian Colleges, one of the largest for-profit vocational educational companies in the US collapsed earlier this year leaving with thousands of students with massive piles of debt or loans in default. In the last year, there has been a litany of examples of dodgy for-profit vocational providers in Australia that have failed to meet vocational education standards and have lumbered students with huge debts. These examples vividly demonstrate what happens when profit governs education provision.

Dean Ashenden, in *The Conversation*, argues that Charter schools will only make our educational problems worse. https://theconversation.com/charter-schools-would-only-make-our-school-systems-problems-worse-46814?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest+from+The+Conversation+for+September+1+2015+-+3329&utm_content=Latest+from+The+Conversation+for+September+1+2015+-+3329+CID_ed36febfeddf943d7c487ae892d49c1e&utm_source=campaign_monitor&utm_term=Charter%20schools%20would%20only%20make%20our%20school%20systems%20problems%20worse

The AEU Victorian branch has unearthed rorts in the Child-care sector, <http://www.aeuvic.asn.au/402892.html> while the Federal AEU is demanding a Federal crackdown on dodgy private training providers. See <http://www.aeufederal.org.au/news-media/media-releases/020915>

**CHARTER AND FOR-PROFIT SCHOOLS ARE A BAD IDEA, BAD POLICY AND BAD
ECONOMICS**

**ONLY PUBLIC EDUCATION CAN GIVE GENUINE OPPORTUNITIES TO OUR CHILDREN AND
ADVANCE THE COMMON GOOD.**

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