

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT  
SCHOOLS  
PRESS RELEASE 804  
WALMART, MASS SHOOTINGS, GUNS AND  
CHARTER SCHOOLS**

Another Mass shooting in America, this time in El Paso, Texas – in a crowded Walmart store. Another terrorist. A few more Trumpian tweets, avoiding the gun lobby issue.

Diane Ravitch and other American educators have joined a few dots. It leads one to ask questions of wealthy corporations who sell guns, ban unions and bankroll ‘for profit ‘charter schools’.

Their analysis underlines the dangers inherent in the privatisation of public education.

#### **WALMART SELLS GUNS**

This latest terrorist shooting took place in a Walmart store in Texas by a young admirer of the Christchurch gunman

According to Harold Meyerson in [The American Prospect](#) roughly half of Walmart’s 4,750 stores sell guns, and the company announced on Monday that that policy would not change.

#### **WALMART PERMITS THE OPEN CARRY OF GUNS**

It also announced that it wouldn’t adopt a no-open-carry policy for its stores, which means that anyone in a state that permits the open carry of firearms—like Texas—can sashay through a Walmart brandishing a gun.

Some Walmart employees have voiced apprehensions about that policy in the aftermath of Monday’s mass murders. “I’m looking around the store, thinking, where can I hide if something happens,” a customer-service employee at a Los Angeles-area Walmart [told](#) *The Washington Post*. “We’re all afraid we’re going to die.”

Getting their employer to prohibit open carry in its stores would be just the sort of proposal Walmart workers could present to their bosses if they had a union. But Walmart’s position on unions was made clear when the butchers in one Texas store endeavoured to form a union some years back. The company responded by shuttering its meat department in that store, in every store in Texas, and in every store in the states surrounding Texas.

#### **WALMART BANS UNIONS**

The grievances that lead workers to seek a union have never been only economic; sometimes, they’re about their concern for life and limb. Such would likely be the case at Walmart today if our labor law actually allowed workers to organize. A timely reminder that American business’s rabid opposition to worker power not only has given us four decades of wage stagnation but that sometimes, it kills.

But what is even more concerning is the information provided by Diane Ravitch.

## **THE WALMART FAMILY FUNDS ONE IN FOUR CHARTER SCHOOLS IN AMERICA**

The Walmart family, which own Walmart, is the richest family in the world. Their family foundation is the single biggest supporter of charter schools. They say they funded one of every four charters in the nation!

In 2016, The Walton Family Foundation — which says it has given some \$1.3 billion in K-12 education across the country over the last two decades — announced early this year that it is committing \$1 billion over the next five years to help expand charter and other school choice options across the country. The Walton Foundation’s “[strategic plan](#),” published in 2015, claims, “1 in 4 charters nationally have received WFF startup funds.”

The Charter school movement came out of the neo-liberal philosophy espoused by the Reagan/Thatcher governments of the 1980s. It was also espoused by the Hawke/Keating and Howard Governments of the 1980s and 1990s.

Walmart are known for opening in small towns, crowding out the local stores, then, leaving town when the profits do not justify the expense.

What will happen if and when their charter schools up sticks and do the same ? This is explored by Jeff Bryant in an article reproduced by the [Washington Post](#) on March 17, 2016. .

Charter schools are funded based on the idea that “money should follow the child.” That is, when students transfer from a public school to a new charter, the per-pupil funding to educate that child transfers as well. Some regard Walmart’s charter school philanthropy as a method of ‘softening up’ public school parents for the introduction of ‘vouchers’.

But [research studies](#) have shown that this financial model harms the education of public school students. As a public school loses a percentage of its students to charters, the school can’t simply cut fixed costs for things like transportation and physical plant proportionally. It also can’t cut the costs of grade-level teaching staff proportionally. That would increase class sizes and leave the remaining students underserved. So instead, the school cuts a program or support service – a reading specialist, a special education teacher, a librarian, an art or music teacher – to offset the loss of funding.

For these reasons, [and others](#), the introduction of charter schools into communities now invariably sparks division and resentment from parents who stay committed to public schools.

Yet, none of the controversy surrounding charters seems to have altered the Walton Family Foundation’s determination to expand the numbers of these schools on the American landscape.

The American experience of privatisation of what was once a proud public school system in the USA, is instructive for those in the Australian situation. The wholesale subsidisation of highly questionable private foundations like the Catholic and other churches in Australia and Waltons in America not only undermines the public education systems of those countries.

It undermines the future opportunities of our children and the future of the country itself.

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