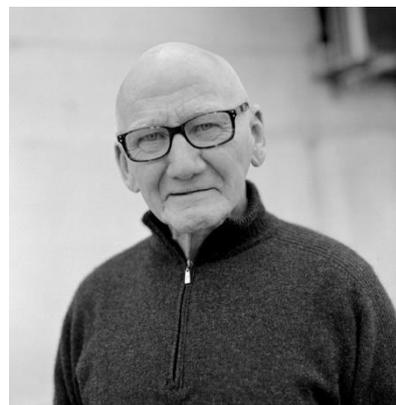


# ‘The People’s Poet’

the ever-resilient **Geoff Goodfellow**  
will return to Tasmania during 2023

**Hobart: 20 – 24 February**

**Launceston & N.W.: 20 – 29 March**



Goodfellow provides audiences with a perspective on working class life in Australia today. He doesn’t romanticize or turn a blind eye to important issues like drug & alcohol abuse, domestic violence, issues of consent, blue collar employment, unemployment, generational poverty and how destitution can manifest in criminal behaviour.

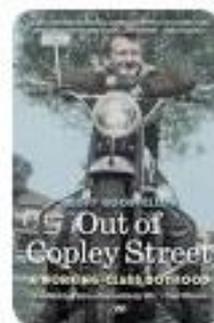
Geoff’s message is strong: **get an education because language is power.**



His latest work is an edgy verse novella, ***Blight Street***. This gives a window into the lives of 16-year-old Carl and his girlfriend Larissa, focusing on the family dysfunction that plagues their everyday lives. Short, brutally honest and yet hopeful, *Blight Street* will appeal to students in Years 10 to 12. The accompanying task-oriented, free, downloadable Study Guide (structured by Tasmanian English teacher, Emily Peterson) is a valuable teaching aid for students and teachers alike.



As a cancer survivor (head and neck cancer in 2008 and currently being treated for bladder cancer), Geoff can talk about resilience and self-discipline and deliver a strong anti-smoking message. His work ***Waltzing with Jack Dancer*** chronicles part of his own battle, giving a vivid demonstration of the power of poetry. Secondary students of all ages will be captivated.



Goodfellow’s prose memoir ***Out of Copley Street: a working class boyhood*** provides an ideal starting point to engage students in the important task of writing their own, personal stories. This will appeal to all high school aged students.

Attached is the poem ‘**Liking Jasmin**’, which will be published as a giveaway postcard for this tour. It’s a poem that will stimulate discussion around how we use language as well as being a poem students will enjoy and relate to.

After Geoff’s work with students in 2022, English teacher Robyn Cooper wrote for EduTATE: **“we wait with eagerness and a sense of certainty for Geoff’s return to Cosgrove High School.”**

**Book early.** Don’t miss out on experiencing Goodfellow’s presentation of poetry for yourself.

**Phone bookings direct to Geoff Goodfellow 0407 972 184**

**Email: [poetforhire@geoffgoodfellow.com](mailto:poetforhire@geoffgoodfellow.com)**

**[www.geoffgoodfellow.com](http://www.geoffgoodfellow.com) (check out the *Blight Street* Study Guide)**

## From the Margins: A Voice for Cosgrove

by Robyn Cooper

FORTY teenagers fidget in their chairs uncertain of what the next two hours will bring. Geoff Goodfellow, The People's Poet, is again visiting Cosgrove High School. It has been almost five years since his previous visit and while he understands what to expect, we definitely do not.

I am nervous. We have spoken on the phone and emailed, but I have never met Geoff. I am conscious that this could go either way.

Geoff stands at the front. He introduces himself and immediately the kids are hooked. I am relieved. They sit on the edge of their seats, clinging to every word. He speaks with cadence drawing us into his world. His journey from blue collar worker to poet. His life before cancer and with cancer. Growing up in Copley Street, his later reflections on Blight Street. His thoughts on education and family disconnect. He connects with the students. Really connects.

His poems are vivid. Spanning decades, they detail his work with adults and young people, of life in factories, in prison, in school and at home. He recounts his visits to Ashley Youth Detention Centre. Of 'furteen' and 14-year-old troubled boys. Of generational poverty and societal degradation. He has a profound ability to provide a voice to the voiceless and a way of being a glimmer of hope for those who have nothing. He swells with pride as he speaks. His stories transcend our local community, striking a chord with those in the room. The kids understand and sit nodding, mesmerised by his sense of fearlessness, compassion and turmoil. Transfixed by his cry for systemic change. There is a sense of camaraderie. Geoff just gets them.

A group of boys remain for a life affirming writing workshop. Taking the time with each student he sits, listens and advises. The connection to each of their stories is admirable and certainly well received. A sense of accomplishment echoes as each student shares their work and connects with each other. This is the first time an opportunity like this has presented itself and there is something deeply gratifying in this moment. It is something far greater than a classroom will ever muster.

Around the yard, Geoff is the talk. 'Did you hear him?' 'He made me jump out of my chair.' 'Who knew poetry could be done like that?' 'Is he coming back?'

The nerves have certainly dissipated. Now we wait with eagerness and a sense of certainty for Geoff's return to Cosgrove High School.

GEOFF Goodfellow was inspired to write the following poem after interacting with a workshop attendee over the course of his day at Cosgrove High. We share it here with the student's, family's, and poet's approval...

### Nailed to the Cross

When i asked for a show of hands  
from boys in the classroom who  
lived without a father  
his hand shot up like a  
smart salute

he told me he was twelve years old  
& lived with his mum & two sisters  
it's hard being the only male  
in the house he said

he wears a gold earring in his left  
earlobe it is hung with a crucifix  
& he sports a smile which is honest  
& endearing

an hour later while we are talking  
man to boy  
i am eating a ripe banana . . .  
when i have emptied the skin  
he rises walks away quietly  
& returns with a rubbish bin

he tells me then he loves his mum  
& that he respects her  
then drops his eyes & lowers his  
voice as he tells me about his childhood

i was only five when i woke one night  
& heard dad belting mum in the kitchen  
i was really scared . . .  
& i was too frightened to get out of bed  
i just lay awake for a long time  
listening to them screaming & yelling  
then doors slamming

it was only after that the house  
finally became quiet  
& that's when i fell asleep

when i woke up in the morning  
he was gone it's been seven years . . .  
& i haven't seen him since

now i put out the bins for mum.



## Liking Jasmin

They were sitting outside of Zambrero  
on Semaphore Road

    seated across from one another  
at a high bench table

they might have been eighteen –  
twenty at the outside

    both good looking girls with  
mousy blonde hair worn up

although they both had loud voices  
it was hard not to overhear the tallest girl  
deliver her rant

*he was like a tradie or something & like  
Jasmin is like into those types of guys &  
she like has been going with him like for  
about four months now & he like tells  
her not to like wear so much makeup &  
like don't wear so much colour & like  
your hair would like suit you better down  
than like up & he like even said don't wear  
heels like i don't like the sound of them  
& she like takes this shit*

& on    & on    & on    it went

now don't get me wrong . . .

i don't relish listening in to people's private  
conversations but the thing about this chick  
doing all the talking was that in all her ranting  
she never once said whether she really like

    liked Jasmin.