



I was brought up to offer my bus seat to my elders so I experience inner conflict whenever I'm sprawled out all over the only banana chair at the caravan park pool and someone senior to me turns up.

Am I supposed to offer the seat to my elders?... Because I have to say, when you travel with grey nomads, everyone is your elder. I'll never get to have it to myself and some days, that's not **just** a banana chair - it's my only refuge from what is another hot, dry day in the middle of nowhere.

When I was a kid, I was expected to play outside for the day and I was only allowed to come in for lunch. For some, this freedom to be outside away from the adults was what they loved most about their childhood.

Not me. As a fair-skinned redhead who wasn't particularly active, having to spend the day outside felt like torture. It was either hot or cold and a day is really long when you're seven and you're not yet allowed to leave the yard.

One hot Australian Christmas, Santa delivered a metal swing-set to our backyard and from that day on, it was my mother's answer if I complained about being bored outside all day by myself.

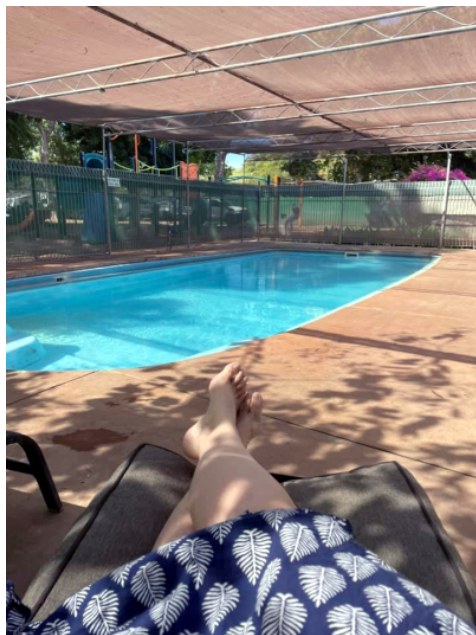
"Go and play on the swings," she'd say from the air-conditioned lounge room.

It didn't matter that the slippery dip was hot enough to brand a cow and that the rusty swing sounded like the screeching shower scene from Psycho as I swung back and forth. I'm sure my imagination developed as a result of having to self entertain but all I remember was callouses on my hands from hours swinging on the monkey bars wondering when I could go back inside.

Van life can make me feel this way. The sun is up and I have to play outside all day.

It's not that I don't like some time outside but it's hard not being able to go home when I've had enough. With no air-conditioning and no living area to sit in, the van is not our pseudo

apartment. It's a Bikram studio, especially in the top end where the temperature doesn't drop below 33 degrees.



All these hours on the road have not done my fitness any favours and so I huff and puff my way to the waterholes which are always a hike away and not just laterally, but vertically. I'm constantly sweating like Rolf Harris in a courtroom and the heat makes me lethargic. But, just like seven-year-old Jo, I have to stay outside all day.

When we pull up at a caravan park, and I spot a banana chair by the pool, I feel like there is a god and she loves me.

I get there early so I can find a spot in the shade and I set up camp for the day. I write, I read and I hold onto my bladder for fear of losing that glorious seat. For that day, the banana chair is my Hilton, my Hyatt, my home. I'm no longer 7 year old Jo with my bum burning on the swing-set, I'm the Queen of comfort Jo sitting in the lap of luxury.

And so to my elders who turn up at the pool with nowhere to sit, I promise I will give you my seat on the bus, but give up this banana chair?.... **My Arse!**

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Check out Jo's Facebook page here: [Van life, my arse](#)

Image: Swimming Pool & feet - (c) Jo Dyson