
DEE AND I

by Elizabeth Jones

Elizabeth Jones originally hails from England. She came to Australia for a holiday in January 2014 and loved it so much she decided to stay. Since leaving university nine years ago, Elizabeth has worked as a writer, mainly at advertising agencies in London. When she's not glued to Netflix chain-drinking tea, Elizabeth enjoys exploring and trying new things. Next on her list is meditation and swing dancing (although probably not at the same time). Elizabeth is currently sharing a flat with Dee in Camberwell.



Towards the end of 2014, I took a huge pay-cut to join an exciting start-up company. This meant that I could no longer afford the gorgeous flat I shared in Southbank (complete with ocean view, swimming pool, sauna and hot tub!) As I was morosely browsing flat-mates.com, I came across an advertisement that said: 'Rent: \$0'. The ad explained that there was a 30-year-old woman in Hawthorn who needed companionship and help with household chores. In return, I wouldn't have to pay rent.

While the \$0 rent had initially piqued my interest, it was the word 'companionship' that really struck a chord. Although I've had plenty of housemates, we've tended to live quite separate lives.

I'm quite a homebody and don't really get out much, so be-

ing friends with my housemate and doing stuff together really appealed to me. (Yep, I admit, I was rather selfishly thinking of my own need for companionship!)

It was a definite crossroads-type decision: the easy, well-trodden option of finding a cheap

room in a shared house, or something completely unknown – and pretty scary. What convinced me to call the number on the ad was the idea of an adventure, something totally new and different.

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I met with UnitingCare LifeAssist and had an in-depth interview with Peri and Jeremy, coordinators of the Homeshare program. During this meeting, they explained that I would be carefully matched with either an elderly person or a person with disabilities. I gave my preference for someone with disabilities, which surprised them. They said that around 90% of people would rather be matched with elderly people. I'm not certain for the reason

"After living with Dee, I can confirm that this really does seem to be why the arrangement works so well. We laugh a lot!"

for this, but I'd hazard a guess that it's fear of the unknown. We've all been around elderly people at some point, but you rarely get the opportunity to spend time with someone with disabilities. This is a huge shame.