



Gina's Story – Voluntary Assisted Dying Podcast April 2024

00:00:00:00 - 00:00:23:08

Alice Morison

Thank you for joining us today to hear people sharing their own stories of their experiences with Voluntary Assisted Dying, or VAD, in Western Australia. These stories are intended to share understanding and journeys of people and families who have explored voluntary assisted dying and are reflective of their own perceptions and experiences. This is not intended to replace care from trained VAD providers.

00:00:23:10 - 00:00:53:09

Alice Morison

Voluntary Assisted Dying is not suicide and is only accessible to people who meet specific criteria, including that they are already dying from an advanced and progressive terminal illness or disease. If you or someone close to you is considering suicide, please reach out to a support service such as Lifeline on 13 11 14. My name is Alice Morrison and I'm privileged to be the Clinical Nurse Consultant leading the WA Voluntary Assisted Dying Statewide Care Navigator Service.

00:00:53:11 - 00:01:12:09

Alice Morison

The Care Navigator Service would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands and waters of Western Australia, paying our respects to elders' past, present and emerging, particularly in acknowledging the rich story sharing culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that guides us today.

00:01:18:04 - 00:01:43:04

Alice Morison

Hello Gina. Thank you so much for joining us to share your, and Robbi's, story with us today. I wonder if you might start by telling us a little bit about how VAD came into your journey. Thanks, Alice, and thanks for having me here. I do want to start with what I was thinking of on the way here was how much we're all bonded by this VAD journey, and it's a bit like



00:01:43:09 - 00:02:14:06

Gina

How you love midwives, even though I've never met you, I love everybody that has given of themselves to do this work. If you like, this, this gives this gift. So, thank you. Yeah, my name's Gina. Robbi was my daughter. I guess is I've still confused about whether you should say was or is. Robbi was 33 when she died, and, she had cancer.

00:02:14:08 - 00:02:40:22

Gina

And so, when she found out she had cancer, she was very clear that if she got to a position where she had no hope or was in pain, she would, elect to have Voluntary Assisted Dying, and, and so that's our journey. Robbi was, she really wanted to die peacefully and respectfully and on her own terms.

00:02:41:02 - 00:03:09:19

Gina and Alice Morison

(Gina) And, I'm so proud of her for that. It's a very brave decision to do. And at a young age, I think so very, very proud of her.

(Alice) Bravery is something that comes up quite a lot in this space. And I think it's not just about bravery around your decision to access VAD. I think it's bravery to do what Robbi did, which is look at life, look at what you have and know that there is a finite outcome for you and to make some conscious and intentional decisions for yourself about what that would look like.

00:03:10:00 - 00:03:35:19

Gina

Exactly. Yeah. And I think it's so important because when you have something like cancer or a terminal disease, so many decisions are taken away from me and so many choices. And yeah, that's that was part of her journey as well. So then to be able to make that final decision for herself, was really empowering. And Robbi had always been an advocate.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

South Metropolitan Health Service

Locked Bag 100 Palmyra DC WA 6961

Telephone (08) 6152 2222

www.southmetropolitan.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

© State of Western Australia, South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying podcast transcript

SMHS Corporate Communications

00:03:35:20 - 00:04:06:02

Gina

She'd always been a strong, independent young woman. She advocated for other people. She advocated for disabilities. When she was in a wheelchair, she found all these, wheelchair accessible paths and took her dogs with her because she trained service dogs. So, it was a natural thing for her to advocate for herself and for us to become advocates for her.

Alice Morison

Gina, do you know how she found out about VAD or where she got the information from in the first place?

00:04:06:03 - 00:04:34:12

Gina

I think she had heard about it and then researched it. She was a researcher. So originally back in 2020 when she was 31, she was, she had gone to the doctor saying, oh, I feel really, uncomfortable. And I've got pain. It turned out the doctors kept telling you, you just fat, lose some weight.

00:04:34:14 - 00:05:00:08

Gina

And it turned out she had a 16-kilo growth in her stomach that was removed. And they said at the time, that it wasn't cancerous, but they put her in and she had a hysterectomy and she had other surgeries. And then eventually led to the fact that she had cancer. And they, they said to her that it was terminal, and she might have 12 months to two years.

00:05:00:10 - 00:05:32:13

Gina

And I think, part of her processing that was, what are my options, you know, if, if and I think that's when she started to research about VAD and then I think 2021 was more about the chemo and the

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

South Metropolitan Health Service

Locked Bag 100 Palmyra DC WA 6961

Telephone (08) 6152 2222

www.southmetropolitan.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

© State of Western Australia, South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying podcast transcript

SMHS Corporate Communications

radiation treatment. You know, the family gathered, her friends gathered to support her through the treatments and see whether it was possible to extend her life.

00:05:32:15 - 00:06:05:01

Gina

And her dad flew over from New Zealand to live in Perth to support her. She got in touch with her brother and he was a huge support for her. And, in fact, one of her lifelong friends, not lifelong, but a very old friend, See, became her closest support and carer from then right through to the very end, and something I'll always be incredibly grateful for to have him on our team, as it were, as a carer.

Alice Morison

It sounds like Robbi was pretty good at bringing her team together.

00:06:05:03 - 00:06:36:21

Gina

Yeah, that was really amazing. So then, when things weren't going so well with the treatment and the chemo and so on, in 2022, we decided we had to start making preparations for what was going to happen. So we had we called together friends and family, her dad and I, Robbi and her brother Jay, and See, sort of the core, and my husband Andrew, who was amazing support throughout.

00:06:36:23 - 00:06:58:09

Gina

And we called together, and we had, death meetings. So, we're very pragmatic people. We've got very black sense of humour in listening to stories about video. It often comes up that, you know, there's a lot of humour and there's a lot of black humour in, in the whole process, because it's part of the way we're processing how it's all happening.

00:06:58:11 - 00:07:18:05

Gina

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

South Metropolitan Health Service

Locked Bag 100 Palmyra DC WA 6961

Telephone (08) 6152 2222

www.southmetropolitan.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

© State of Western Australia, South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying podcast transcript

SMHS Corporate Communications

And we were trying to think of something really gentle and lovely that we could call these meetings where we were going to do preparation and have conversations with Robbi's closest friends and people in her life and her family, her parents. And we decided, why not just call it death like it's death. We'll talk about it.

00:07:18:07 - 00:07:45:06

Gina

So, we had these death meetings and they were both poignant, hilarious, informative. And at that point, Robbi brought up with her larger group. Although she'd spoken to most of them, she bought it up to them. You know, this is my wish. I want to access Voluntary Assisted Dying.

00:07:45:08 - 00:08:19:20

Gina

Everybody around the table talked about what it might mean. One of her friends was a nurse and would say, okay, but what if this happens? What do you want us to do? And I know that this may happen. So how do you want us to manage that? And at what point do you want to access VAD and so we talked about it and a couple of people in the room when nervous, I think we're all a bit nervous, but they were like, oh, I don't want her to access the Voluntary Assisted Dying.

00:08:19:22 - 00:08:44:17

Gina

they got to say that and ask questions and come to understand why, what it was about and move through some of the unknown, which is, I think sometimes why people get very, you know, nervous about talking about it because these kind of unknown.

Alison Morison

It is, it is still very new in Western Australia.

00:08:44:23 - 00:09:12:01

Alice Morison

We're in over two and half years now but that's still new in terms of healthcare and it being an available option so I'm not surprised to hear that her close knit friendship group would be pretty apprehensive. I think there's lots of stuff there and I, I wonder and I'd be keen to hear, your

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

South Metropolitan Health Service

Locked Bag 100 Palmyra DC WA 6961

Telephone (08) 6152 2222

www.southmetropolitan.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

© State of Western Australia, South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying podcast transcript

SMHS Corporate Communications

thoughts Gina, what you think it was and how much of that initial apprehension and not wanting Robbi to access it was about uncertainty and not knowing what it really was and also just not being ready to say goodbye to Robbi.

00:09:12:03 - 00:09:36:18

Gina

I think that's the key, your final statement there is the key. I think people are not so much afraid of the death part of it, but the grief part of it. And so, you know, how am I going to cope? I don't want to say goodbye to this person. You know, I her mother, I don't want to say goodbye, but I want to.

00:09:36:18 - 00:10:04:22

Gina

I want the journey to be what she has chosen. And I, I've since learned what a beautiful gift it was. So I think in being open and talking about it, people got to express, you know, I don't want her to choose death, because in that moment when you're sitting there and you're talking and she's laughing and you're laughing and we're having a cup of tea and why would I want you to choose to die?

00:10:04:22 - 00:10:35:07

Gina

That's a terrible thing to think. And then later, you know, as the journey progressed through, when you when you're with somebody who's terminally ill and you're watching them in pain or in, you know, the grief and the sadness of it and, and the unknown and you know, you feel very differently at that point in many ways. Because you see that this is where they get some agency in their life.

00:10:35:09 - 00:11:05:12

Gina

And so, the people that were questioning that then, that I believe her friends were thinking, I don't want her to die. Of course. And I'm the same. So as her dad, we all were. But at the same time, I think, and maybe because as her parents and the old fogies in the room, we knew a bit more experience about, you know, life and death and, and so we talked about it.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

South Metropolitan Health Service

Locked Bag 100 Palmyra DC WA 6961

Telephone (08) 6152 2222

www.southmetropolitan.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

© State of Western Australia, South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying podcast transcript

SMHS Corporate Communications

00:11:05:16 - 00:11:31:13

Gina

And I think that's the biggest key, with all of her friends, with her, they talked with us, we talked with them, we all talked with Robbi and got clear and were honest and frank. And even the people that were saying, I don't, I don't want this to happen, were really saying I don't want her to die.

Alice Morison

I think it's about coming to the understanding that Robbi wasn't choosing to die.

00:11:31:14 - 00:12:02:07

Alice Morison

She was facing very clearly that she was going to die and what she was choosing was the timing, the manner and the nature of that death. Not whether or not she got to live forever.

Gina

That's exactly right. And it's a pragmatic choice in the end, because you're not going to fight it, it's what's happening. So, I think at that stage, because it was like a, well, about a year before she died, no some months, 6 or 7 months before she died,

00:12:02:09 - 00:12:33:15

Gina

It also helps begin that journey of letting it sink in. You know that she's dying. You can't deny it. Well, people do. But, you know, for us, as a family, we weren't denying it. We were embracing it as best as we could. And as hard as it was, we absolutely, you know, I still you can feel emotion come up even when you talk about it.

00:12:33:17 - 00:13:12:22

Gina

But we wanted to embrace her choice. And yeah, I think you need to do that to give her so when she might.

Alice Morison

It's a precious gift to give her. When she decided that it was the right time to start the process, how did how did she began the process?

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

South Metropolitan Health Service

Locked Bag 100 Palmyra DC WA 6961

Telephone (08) 6152 2222

www.southmetropolitan.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

© State of Western Australia, South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying podcast transcript

SMHS Corporate Communications

Gina

So we were, she made some plans about what she wanted to do between now and, and when she would speak in the accessing the VAD, which is what I think you're referring to.

00:13:12:24 - 00:13:35:15

Gina

I just want to go back one step, because one of the things that we did, Robbi, in life, we did road trip. She always wanted to do a road trip across Australia. And her and I had played the game since the kids were little, the "Get Lost" game. So, you know, we would just go out and go. One person would say left, one person would say, right, we take it in turns until we got completely lost.

00:13:35:17 - 00:14:02:10

Gina

And as she was getting her license and she would play that game with us that she could teach this one, go for drive like to nowhere and we might, you know, we might go for a drive and find ourselves suddenly in Toodyay or, you know, somewhere random. So when she said, you know, one of the things I want to do before I get to sick is, after she realised the treatment wasn't working is to do this road trip.

00:14:02:10 - 00:14:27:16

Gina

So, we drove across Australia together, the two of us, and had the best trip. And again, you know, just briefly, I think that's one of the things that Voluntary Assisted Dying gives you, even moving closer to the day. But an opportunity to know this is what's coming and what do I want to do, you know, how do I want to spend that time between now and then?

00:14:27:18 - 00:14:55:02

Gina

So, we hadn't accessed the VAD process yet, but we knew where we were heading. And so we chose this trip and we had a fantastic time, and it was incredible. And we talked and talked and talked and laughed and, you know, had such a great time. Cried. Healed with each other, which was beautiful. She ended up in Griffith in, New South Wales, unfortunately in hospital, just after that trip.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

South Metropolitan Health Service

Locked Bag 100 Palmyra DC WA 6961

Telephone (08) 6152 2222

www.southmetropolitan.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

© State of Western Australia, South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying podcast transcript

SMHS Corporate Communications

00:14:55:02 - 00:15:20:12

Gina

So, I had to fly back and be with her where she had a bowel obstruction. And it was at that point that, they said, she's going to, access palliative care. And they were trying to say she would access it from there. And I and See was with her all the way. So, I kind of delivered her to see in Melbourne.

00:15:20:12 - 00:15:48:04

Gina

And they drove up to New South Wales together and then, so they said she would have to access palliative care from there. And, and I was saying, no, that's not, we can't do that, we have to get her back to Western Australia. Her oncology team and the team that she'd worked with, at the hospital she'd been in, she felt really confident with them, Robbi also, had autism and ADHD.

00:15:48:04 - 00:16:16:19

Gina

So, there were a lot of, triggers and things that were really important for her to have some consistency in both the people that she trusted. It was very difficult for her on a psychosocial level, not to have people around her that she trusted and understood what the systems were and what the hospital was like, and those sorts of things.

Alice Morison

Which is a completely reasonable expectation. You want your tribe around you when you are making those decisions, at the end of the day.

00:16:16:21 - 00:16:37:22

Gina

It was kind of like, you know, stranded over there. It took a lot to get her back, but they intubated her, and, after a lot of drama, we ended up getting her back, and we flew back into Perth, and she went straight into a faith-based hospital that she'd been in before doing the oncology.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

South Metropolitan Health Service

Locked Bag 100 Palmyra DC WA 6961

Telephone (08) 6152 2222

www.southmetropolitan.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

© State of Western Australia, South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying podcast transcript

SMHS Corporate Communications

00:16:37:24 - 00:17:01:11

Gina

And she felt comfortable with that oncology team. So, we got her back, the ambulance from the airport and, got her up there. So that was a big step. And then because they were saying then she hadn't eaten for a couple of weeks and she was intubated and they were saying, you know, we're heading into full palliative care.

00:17:01:11 - 00:17:38:08

Gina

So, at that time, she wanted to access for the VAD and rang the care navigators and so on. Unfortunately, there was a few hiccups there with it being a faith-based hospital. There was some miscommunication, significantly. And, they also wouldn't allow her to have the assessments on site, which made it quite difficult for her because she had to be moved offsite in order to see the doctors, and access the assessments.

00:17:38:10 - 00:18:04:15

Gina

Yeah, that that makes it very difficult because, she was, being fed, TPN machine, and therefore she was at risk of falling into a coma.

Alice Morison

She was quite worried about her blood sugar, as well, wasn't she?

Gina

Everything. Yeah. She hadn't eaten. She was reliant on these machines. and so it was quite nerve wrecking.

00:18:04:17 - 00:18:33:13

Gina

And so, moving her to get these assessments. So, once we got through the assessments, it was kind of like from Griffith on, we were, we were fighting to get her to a VAD date. We didn't know if she would make it through and not fall into a coma. So, at that time, that was our main energy.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

South Metropolitan Health Service

Locked Bag 100 Palmyra DC WA 6961

Telephone (08) 6152 2222

www.southmetropolitan.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

© State of Western Australia, South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying podcast transcript

SMHS Corporate Communications

00:18:33:15 - 00:19:17:01

Gina

Meanwhile, she had a lot of people coming and going to see her, to spend time with her, which is beautiful, but also incredibly exhausting. You know, she's also had to deal with the emotional response of all of these people, saying goodbye in whatever way they could or wanted to. So, by the time that we had got to success with the VAD process and she was up to setting a date, she was very, very ready and very tired and so, I've, I've heard that some people found setting a date to be quite stressful.

00:19:17:01 - 00:19:42:08

Gina

And it is in fact, on many levels it's, it's there's a deadline. It's like, oh it's happening.

Alice Morison

It's interesting, you know, often we find that families and the person themselves have different feelings around that. You know, often when someone's had those two medical assessments and might they find a request to the doctor and make the administration decision together,

00:19:42:08 - 00:20:09:19

Alice Morison

Often for the person, we hear that it's quite a release. Yes. They know then it's available, if/when they choose to use it a. But for the family it becomes a real and tangible option. I mean, it sounds like such a journey for all of you who were really supporting Robbi and for those advocating on her behalf and her advocating for herself, it's quite traumatic, a very much a complex experience for you all. To get to that point and all of a sudden now this is actually a viable and available option.

00:20:09:22 - 00:20:40:14

Alice Morison

Must have been quite challenging, particularly for you, as her Mum.

Gina

it was challenging and as it was a relief, but it was also still very tense. Can we get her there? Can we get her to the date? So, it's almost like I didn't have time to absorb the grief of this is the date. It was almost like it, sounds bizarre, but, you know, like when your kids get to go to a sports carnival or something and it's a big build up and you're like, you're all about that.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

South Metropolitan Health Service

Locked Bag 100 Palmyra DC WA 6961

Telephone (08) 6152 2222

www.southmetropolitan.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

© State of Western Australia, South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying podcast transcript

SMHS Corporate Communications

00:20:40:14 - 00:21:22:04

Gina

You know? To get to get them there is the most important thing. So for me, that became everything to get her there and to get her there in a way that she could, you know. Sorry.

Alice Morison

So, thinking about Robbi's journey, how many weeks was for her, from when she decided like, now's the time to when it was available to her and when you were talking about dates?

Gina

Well, so we it would have been about two, three weeks, I think, you know, they, we couldn't bring it forward.

00:21:22:04 - 00:22:05:07

Gina

But again, we were having a lot of trouble with this faith based hospital and the logistics of getting her in and out of the hospital and so on and also leaving the hospital for her final journey. And just as a side note, I'm pleased to say that, the care navigators, both Meg and Joe and the beautiful Doctor Claire, worked with me tirelessly after Robbi had passed to, get changed, some of the, procedures, communications policies at that particular hospital to make it easier for people in future.

00:22:05:10 - 00:22:27:00

Gina

And I promised Robbi that before she died that I would advocate and it was a very powerful thing to do. So I'm very pleased that some of that has now changed and will be a lot less difficult for other people in some ways. Still, a way to go, but in some ways, it will be an easier journey if somebody accesses the VAD in that faith-based hospital.

00:22:27:00 - 00:23:07:08

Alice Morison

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

South Metropolitan Health Service

Locked Bag 100 Palmyra DC WA 6961

Telephone (08) 6152 2222

www.southmetropolitan.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

© State of Western Australia, South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying podcast transcript

SMHS Corporate Communications

Gina, you talk a lot about how proud you are of Robbi, but I imagine that she is extraordinarily proud of you, too.

Gina

Yeah. Yes, I feel it. I do feel that. So, she set the date for the 27th of October and at 3.30pm, and, we worked to get her there, and it was scary, challenging, that I kept saying to her, you realise, like, you'll be sitting up talking to us or lying down talking to us, and then you won't.

00:23:07:10 - 00:23:34:05

Gina

And that, for me, was a very weird thought. For her, she wasn't scared. By then, she'd fully accepted this is what was happening. And like you say, for the person, it's often a relief. We would have jokes about it, you know, we would, we all have the bizarre senses of humour. so that was great.

00:23:34:05 - 00:23:56:06

Gina

And she would say, you know, I can't wait. And, you know, and what am I going to eat? And, you know, because she hadn't eaten by that stage for three and a half weeks. And so she said, you know, she couldn't have anything to swallow because she had a bowel obstruction. So she was saying, it won't matter. I could eat whatever I like, and it doesn't matter because it's not going to kill me.

00:23:56:09 - 00:24:20:16

Gina

And so that was really good. So we set the date and we managed to get her out of that hospital and she had to have her port intact so that she could have the medication delivered via the port because she couldn't swallow. And, we didn't know whether it, you know, having the bowel obstruction would cause problems.

00:24:20:18 - 00:24:43:05

Gina

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

South Metropolitan Health Service

Locked Bag 100 Palmyra DC WA 6961

Telephone (08) 6152 2222

www.southmetropolitan.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

© State of Western Australia, South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying podcast transcript

SMHS Corporate Communications

But we got her to her father's house, and they had, decorated the space. By then she was she was very tired, but elated to have made it to this day. And in fact, there's a beautiful photo of her and I in the back of the ambulance, and she's got both thumbs up. I made it, you know!

00:24:43:06 - 00:25:02:05

Gina

Oh, no, it's a peace sign like that. It seems weird, doesn't it? And there's her mum and her. And, you know, we're both grinning because we made it. We worked very hard to get it there.

00:25:02:07 - 00:25:30:09

Gina

And it was beautiful to know that she could be at peace and that she could go under her own terms. and so, and Meg and Doctor Claire, as I said before, it's incredible how much you love these people. They're part of the family in the weirdest way. But as I said, maybe like a midwife?

00:25:31:13 - 00:25:51:07

Alice Morison

Yeah, maybe like a strange cousin? It's interesting that you draw that parallel with, the midwives because we actually do have some doctors and internationally that where, obstetricians people that deliver a baby for a job, choose to do this work as well, because it's that beautiful transitional period at the start of life, at the end of life. It really is a holy, sacred space to be able to be a part of. Its so beautiful that you chose that language, Gina.

00:25:51:09 - 00:26:17:11

Gina

It's such a beautiful cycle. And as a mother, as well. She asked to go to her dad's place and, we set up a bed.

00:26:17:13 - 00:26:40:10

Gina

He and her brother did, and her brother cooked these tuna patties that we all love. She'd gone from having a full feast where, you know, we all had to bring stuff to realising she would have maybe two

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

South Metropolitan Health Service

Locked Bag 100 Palmyra DC WA 6961

Telephone (08) 6152 2222

www.southmetropolitan.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

© State of Western Australia, South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying podcast transcript
SMHS Corporate Communications

mouthfuls of something. So, that was a relief, quite honestly, I hate cooking and didn't want to cater at the time.

Gina

So, we all got together and, she said to me, I want to, she did a Facebook post and, you know, she, she said goodbye to her friends and, and then she said, I want to watch a movie with you, Encanto. And, because I'd said to her, I've watched this movie, and I love it because we both love Mexican style, "Day of the Dead".

00:27:08:08 - 00:27:34:11

Gina

And she said how appropriate to watch this movie about "Day of the Dead" on the day she was dying. So, we started watching Encanto and it got to about, 2.30pm. And she said to me, could you ring Meg? And I said, yeah, sure. Why? Everything okay? She said, oh yeah, yeah, I, I just if she comes at 3.30pm, I won't be able to see the end of the movie.

00:27:34:13 - 00:27:39:04

Alice Morrison

(Laughing) You need to have closure in all things, including animated films, it's very important.

00:27:39:06 - 00:28:03:05

Gina

It was quite funny and so Robbi. So incredibly Robbi. Like, you know, could you just? So, I rang and said, you know, so sorry, I wonder if you wouldn't mind coming just a little bit later? Meg was so beautiful and she said I could I just chat with Robbi and just see, you know, is everything okay? And do you still want to?

00:28:03:05 - 00:28:32:22

Gina

Because one of the things I loved about the process was, of course, at every moment, at every step, Robbi was able to say, yes, I want to go ahead. Or she had the option at all times to say, I'm not ready or I don't want to. And I think that's so beautiful as well for her, because she was fighting time and fighting, not going into a coma.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

South Metropolitan Health Service

Locked Bag 100 Palmyra DC WA 6961

Telephone (08) 6152 2222

www.southmetropolitan.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

© State of Western Australia, South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying podcast transcript

SMHS Corporate Communications

00:28:32:24 - 00:28:57:12

Gina

It was vitally important to her that it happened. But for her to be able to say, "I just, I just want to watch this movie with Mum, do you mind coming half an hour later?" And Doctor Claire make was so beautiful. So beautiful.

Alice Morison

The agency of that is so important. It's fundamentally Robbi's choice for that and what's best for Robbi.

00:28:57:12 - 00:29:36:21

Gina

And that's exactly how it felt and how it felt the whole way through. They were so loving and supportive. All of the people that we dealt with that were in the Voluntary Assisted Dying family were amazing. Absolutely amazing. And the process was that, Meg and Doctor Claire arrived half an hour later, as agreed, and they came in with such respect, love and professionalism in the nicest, most loving way.

00:29:36:23 - 00:30:05:00

Gina

They sat down with us. So we had we Robbi in her bed, and there was me at one side of her head. And then her friend, See, her brother, Jay, my husband, Andrew, never a stepdad, really, and her dad and Meg and Doctor Claire sat down and told us, here's what's going to happen.

00:30:05:02 - 00:30:34:21

Gina

You know, we'll sit down here. I was amazed at things like they had a had a long drip line so that they could sit at the end of the bed and not be intruding on the space. I just thought that was so beautiful to, give us this close space right there with Robbi. And they could be back there, you know, dealing with that stuff and not intruding.

00:30:34:23 - 00:31:10:21

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

South Metropolitan Health Service

Locked Bag 100 Palmyra DC WA 6961

Telephone (08) 6152 2222

www.southmetropolitan.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

© State of Western Australia, South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying podcast transcript

SMHS Corporate Communications

Gina

They were so beautiful, and they set things up, then they went into another room and they said, you just call us when you're ready and we'll come back in. And just that, that again, loving respect of this is entirely your space. This is Robbi. What you choose and your family. And it was so beautiful. And then they came back into the room, and they said to Robbi, "are you ready?"

00:31:10:23 - 00:31:43:08

Gina

"Do you agree?" You know, the final statement of yes and Robbi's. Yes, yes, I agree. And, and it's really hard to sit next to your daughter and hold her hand and hear her agree. But I'm so proud to be there. And, so she looked up and we all had a hand on her somewhere, and she looked up and she said.

00:31:43:10 - 00:32:06:20

Gina

"Goodnight, Grammy, Goodnight See. Goodnight, Jay. Goodnight Andrew. Goodnight, Dad". And then she got the substance through the line and she went to sleep.

00:32:06:22 - 00:32:45:01

Gina

And it was beautiful. And so, it was a lovely, peaceful moment. And after all of the fighting and the drama to get to this point, I was so thrilled and grateful that she could die with such beautiful peace and dignity. She'd fought her way to get there, and then she could breathe in and out and take a moment and then say goodbye.

00:32:45:03 - 00:32:52:14

Gina

Nothing more precious and beautiful than that.

00:32:52:16 - 33:11:23

Alice Morison

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

South Metropolitan Health Service

Locked Bag 100 Palmyra DC WA 6961

Telephone (08) 6152 2222

www.southmetropolitan.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

© State of Western Australia, South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying podcast transcript

SMHS Corporate Communications

Take a moment. We both probably need one after that.

00:33:11:24 - 00:33:36:02

Gina

It was beautiful.

Alice Morison

It's funny thing isn't it? Because people will use that language so much about someone dying. And I think looking from the outside, if this isn't a space that you've considered or a space that you've been involved in in any way, hearing the idea that a parent or a mother could talk about their daughter's death is beautiful seems so strange.

00:33:36:04 - 00:34:10:09

Alice Morison

But it's so clear listening to you talk about Robbi and listening to what those last few moments were that that's exactly what it was.

Gina

It was, it was. And it's why I call VAD a gift. And the gift was from Robbi. Because we weren't sitting, not being able to sleep at night waiting for a phone call. We weren't, you know, on edge about everything.

00:34:10:11 - 00:34:39:19

Gina

We knew when it was going to happen, and we knew what was going to happen and we knew that we could be there. And that was so important. And, the gift, the absolute gift of being able to be there. And I said to her dad, we were there to bring her into the world. And we're here together to see the world.

00:34:39:21 - 00:35:01:11

Gina

And that's so precious, so precious that we could be there in that moment again.

Alice Morison

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

South Metropolitan Health Service

Locked Bag 100 Palmyra DC WA 6961

Telephone (08) 6152 2222

www.southmetropolitan.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

© State of Western Australia, South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying podcast transcript

SMHS Corporate Communications

It's a remarkable and precious thing. One of the things that this choice can do is remove so much of the fear. It's like, you know, that you've just popped to the shop. Or you just went home for a sleep or you've just stepped out of the room for a moment.

00:35:01:11 - 00:35:39:19

Alice Morison

And when you feel so strongly about being present with your precious person when they die. That you know all things being well and Robbi making it home in the ambulance. You know, all those things happening is a certainty for you all. That you get to be together.

Gina

Yes, and I think that is such a relief. And so many people who've been around, people that are dying or terminally ill or aged parents or grandparents, they know that that constant fear and that constant stress of being ever vigilant while somebody is dying.

00:35:39:19 - 00:36:07:09

Gina

And it can take days, weeks, months, years sometimes. And , you know, to just have that feeling of constantly being on alert. Well, that's the gift of VAD, that you're not constantly on alert. So to that, I mean, we were slightly different in that we were trying to be time to make sure she made it to the date.

00:36:07:12 - 00:36:18:16

Gina

But I think the gift of not having to be on alert is enormous.

00:36:18:18 - 00:36:32:22

Alice Morison

And, you know, is there anything that you would really want someone who was embarking on this process, whether it's a person for themselves or family supporting them, that you would want them to know.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

South Metropolitan Health Service

Locked Bag 100 Palmyra DC WA 6961

Telephone (08) 6152 2222

www.southmetropolitan.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

© State of Western Australia, South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying podcast transcript

SMHS Corporate Communications

00:36:32:24 - 00:37:13:21

Gina

I think, as we've said, the gift of VAD is that, when you're in this situation in particular, where you've had so many choices and decisions taken away from you, when you're terminally ill and you've been either in hospital or hospice or palliative care. It's finally so precious for a person to be able to make a choice for themselves, after they've lost so much in terms of, you know, I mean, even the cleaner knows when you last bowel movement was if you're in hospital, it's really impersonal.

00:37:13:21 - 00:37:43:01

Gina

And so I would say firstly, support for anybody that chooses to have that agency to die with dignity and under their own terms, and for them giving that gift to their family, I would say, talk about death, people! Talk about it! Have the death meetings, have several, have a whole dinner party, and don't wait till you're 50 or 60.

00:37:43:03 - 00:38:09:19

Gina

You know, if you're young people. Young people. I sound like an old foggy if you are young people, like, organise a hilarious death party. But do it and talk about it. And then do the paperwork, have those things be handled and put away. So the , you know, the paperwork being your will, power of attorney and, you know health care plan.

00:38:09:20 - 00:38:37:01

Gina

Although you can't put VAD in that you can still express your wishes in there and you can and that way to gift again. Because if something happens to you, your family knows where you sit with those things. And that's so important. So, we talked about death from the day Robbi found out she had the tumour to the day she died.

00:38:37:03 - 00:39:07:02

Gina

And after, you know, we talked, we laughed, we cried. It's hard work. But talk about it. It's normal. It's challenging. It's funny, sad. Just talk about it. Have death dinner parties with your family.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

South Metropolitan Health Service

Locked Bag 100 Palmyra DC WA 6961

Telephone (08) 6152 2222

www.southmetropolitan.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

© State of Western Australia, South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying podcast transcript
SMHS Corporate Communications

Alice Morison

I think they should all be Encanto themed from now on. Get you Mexican flags out and have some amazing Mexican food and sit together.

00:39:07:02 - 00:39:19:00

Gina

I think it's a perfect theme, and in fact, Robbi's wake was, Day of the Dead de Los Muertos. And it was beautiful.

00:39:19:02 - 00:39:31:23

Alice Morison

Is there anything that really surprised you about this journey, Gina?

00:39:32:00 - 00:40:02:05

Gina

I think, the idea, what surprised me was the idea that Robbi would be there one moment and not the next. And I hadn't thought about that. I had followed through all of this journey. "Yes, do this, do that" and I hadn't thought about that until the last couple of days. And it surprised me. I came to terms with it very quickly.

00:40:02:05 - 00:40:42:10

Gina

But, there's so many things you can't anticipate, you don't know. So that that was something, it surprises me the strength that I feel to advocate for VAD. I would stand up anywhere at any time and talk about it, and the number of people who have come and talk to me and ask me questions and friends that are either going through cancer or have a family member who've asked me to talk to them, or, and just sit and have a conversation.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

South Metropolitan Health Service

Locked Bag 100 Palmyra DC WA 6961

Telephone (08) 6152 2222

www.southmetropolitan.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

© State of Western Australia, South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying podcast transcript

SMHS Corporate Communications

00:40:42:12 - 00:41:12:03

Gina

It's not a lecture, it's just a conversation. The amount of people that have asked me has been extraordinary and such a privilege. Such a privilege to be able to share with them, to take away some of the fear and say, take agency. And one woman who is in her late 60s said to me, I feel so guilty that I want to elect for Voluntary Assisted Dying.

00:41:12:03 - 00:41:36:02

Gina

I feel guilty to my family. And after sitting down and talking about what a gift it was for me as a mother from my daughter, she said, oh wow, I had no idea, this is a gift I'll be giving them to talk to them about it and choose this! I said in my belief 100%.

Alice Morison

And everyone is different, and everyone's journey is different.

00:41:36:04 - 00:41:54:12

Alice Morison

There's a few things when we think about VAD, that often get a bit mismatched and confused, and I think having a conversation about VAD and asking questions about it doesn't mean person's going to go, oh yeah, sometimes the conversation is just a conversation and choosing to formally start the process and be assessed doesn't mean that you'll be found eligible.

00:41:54:12 - 00:42:15:04

Alice Morison

It just means that you're choosing to be assessed and start exploring the process. And sometimes even being found ineligible can bring with it, unexpected treasures, you know, different connections, different referrals to different services that might improve your quality of life or improve other things that are impacting on your choices in that space, through information and understanding,

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

South Metropolitan Health Service

Locked Bag 100 Palmyra DC WA 6961

Telephone (08) 6152 2222

www.southmetropolitan.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

© State of Western Australia, South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying podcast transcript

SMHS Corporate Communications

00:42:15:06 - 00:42:41:15

Alice Morison

We know that they just because the VAD is available to you, doesn't mean that you ever have to use it, just that it is there. Yes.

Gina

And isn't it the same though with the paperwork? So many people won't do their Advanced Health Directives because they think that that's them telling people, oh, this is what, you know, you have to do.

00:42:41:15 - 00:43:13:12

Gina

And I keep saying to people, if you have a voice, it will never be enacted. It's only so people around you know what to do if you don't have the voice for yourself. And that makes it so much easier for your family or your loved ones. It's the same about talking about VAD. I'll talk about VAD. I may never, ever have occasion to access it for myself, but doesn't mean I can't absorb the information and know what's available. So simple.

00:43:13:14 - 00:43:26:15

Alice Morison

Do you have anything else that you want us to talk about? Anything that we haven't touched on that you'd like to mention?

00:43:26:17 - 00:43:53:13

Gina

No, I just want to say I'm very proud of my daughter and the choices. And I'm very proud of our family. And, I'm a huge advocate for Voluntary Assisted Dying. And the choice it gives you, whether you take it up in the end or not. Please get informed, be informed and know that it's a beautiful, beautiful gift.

00:43:53:13 - 00:44:16:07

Alice Morison

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

South Metropolitan Health Service

Locked Bag 100 Palmyra DC WA 6961

Telephone (08) 6152 2222

www.southmetropolitan.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

© State of Western Australia, South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying podcast transcript

SMHS Corporate Communications

Gina, thank you so much for sharing yours and Robbi's incredible journey. I think what it gives us is, is not just an understanding about what that can be like for Robbi, but an understanding about how a family can choose to support someone they love and how you can come together and what that can really bring to you, but also to the person who's at the centre of this and how much you love them.

So yeah, thank you from the bottom of my heart.

00:44:16:08 - 00:44:20:18

Gina

Thanks, Alice

00:44:21:10 - 00:44:30:02

Alice Morison

This podcast is proudly produced by the South Metropolitan Health Service. Thank you for joining me today and stay tuned for the next episode.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

South Metropolitan Health Service

Locked Bag 100 Palmyra DC WA 6961

Telephone (08) 6152 2222

www.southmetropolitan.health.wa.gov.au

Compiled: South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

© State of Western Australia, South Metropolitan Health Service 2024

Voluntary Assisted Dying podcast transcript

SMHS Corporate Communications