



Media Statement

July 29, 2018

Everyone can be an eye donor and help save sight

The Lions Eye Institute (LEI) and the Lions Eye Bank of WA are hoping to change perceptions among potential eye donors that only “good eyes” are used for tissue transplantation and medical research.

Eye Bank Manager Lisa Buckland said many people believed their poor vision or eye disease precluded them from becoming a donor.

“People who wear glasses often believe they cannot be eye donors, as well as those with macular degeneration, cataracts or diabetic retinopathy,” she said.

“However, this is not true. None of these conditions or treatments affects the cornea, which is used in corneal transplants for people with a range of eye diseases, infection or trauma.”

Ms Buckland said medical researchers were particularly interested in receiving eye tissue donations from people with eye disease as it helped contribute to greater scientific understanding of the disease and could lead to the development of new treatments.

“At the Lions Eye Bank of WA, we collect, process and distribute corneal and scleral tissue for transplantation, but also to advance medical research – helping scientists develop the treatments and cures that could transform lives in the future,” she said.

The donation by Phil Eaton, who died in 2010, for example, directly supported LEI research into preventing vision loss.

His donation contributed to detailed histological studies on the microvasculature of the human eye by the LEI's Physiology and Pharmacology research group.

More than 20 papers were published based on findings from the histology studies on human donor eyes - research that would not have been possible without the availability of human donor eyes.

For Phil Eaton's wife Carol, of Rossmoyne, the decision to become an organ and tissue donor brought great comfort to the family.

"A few weeks before he died, I approached the subject of organ donation with Phil and our two children Amy and Kathryn," she said.

"Eventually we were put in touch with one of the Donor Coordinators for DonateLife. She was like an angel that came into our lives to help ease the heartache we knew was coming.

"She gave Phil such peace and happiness knowing his donation could help others to live longer and he was leaving behind a gift to complete his life's journey."

The LEI and the Lions Eye Bank of WA want all Western Australians to consider becoming organ, tissue and eye donors for transplantation and medical research as part of DonateLife Week, which runs from July 29 to August 5.

Last year, Lions Eye Bank performed 250 corneal transplants using donated corneas and overall, has completed almost 5000 procedures.

"That is 5000 people who have had their sight restored through the generosity of people whose wishes to become donors were fulfilled," Ms Buckland said. "That is a

remarkable legacy. While it's important to register your wish, it's also vital you discuss this with your family.”

People can get more information or register in less than a minute by accessing the www.donatelife.gov.au website.

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