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Corneal graft is a reassuring sight

Before undergoing eye surgery, life without sight was a harsh reality for Australian born rapper 360. The hip hop legend is now urging south western Sydney residents to use World Sight Day on Thursday October 13 as an opportunity to share their organ and tissue donation decisions with a loved one.

“When I was 19, I was diagnosed with a very rare degenerative eye disease called Keratoconus which causes the cornea to become extremely thin and turn into a cone line shape,” 360 said.

Keratoconus causes the cornea to become distorted and clouded, so that light cannot pass through to the retina at the back of the eyeball, where images are formed. The disease does not always lead to blindness, but for people like 360 (Matt Colwell), transplant surgery was the only cure.

“A few years later, I had a corneal graft (transplant). I never thought that you could get a transplant for something so small like your cornea. It still blows my mind. I remember when I came out of the operation, my eye was all messed up looking and after a week, it just looked like a normal eye.

“Only if you looked closely, you could see there were all these minuscule stitches that got taken out slowly over time,” he said.

360 said he’s eternally grateful for the gift he’s received and has pledged to do the same for someone else when it’s his turn.

“I wish that I could thank the person who donated their cornea to me. I am now an organ donor and hope that when my time comes, I can help someone in the same way that I have been helped. You too should become an organ donor,” he said.

SWSLHD Intensivist Dr Michael Parr said corneas can be donated for transplantation by people of any age.

“One donor can make a big difference to those in need. Cornea donors give the gift of sight to two people. Skin donors help burn victims recover from traumatic injuries and bone donors help plenty of people return to good health,” Dr Parr said.

“The eyes of older people can be used for research and while some cancer patients cannot donate other organs for transplant, many can help restore a world of colour to two people by donating their eyes,” he said.

Further information about organ and tissue donation can be obtained by visiting www.donatelife.gov.au