

Eyes see all!

My name is Melissa and I consider myself to be very fortunate. I was diagnosed with a corneal disease, Kerataconus, 23 years ago at the age of 21. I was told then that should my condition deteriorate I would require a corneal graft, 'though we don't do many of those'.

In my late thirties I was devastated to learn that I was 'technically blind'. As my condition was a gradual, slow deterioration, I had no idea how impaired my vision really was, I just adjusted. I had a young daughter, did office work and lived life, unaware how serious my condition had become.

My name was immediately added to the list, as a corneal graft was my only option. A very daunting thought! I am fortunate to have been the recipient of two beautiful donor corneas.

I remember my first real venture back into the world of sight. It was one morning and I looked out the window. I could see veins on leaves, specks on concrete, tiles on roofs and I could see for a mile (well I thought so anyway) – I broke down! I wanted to tell the world that I could now see its beauty in its entirety.

There is mixed feelings associated with being a tissue recipient. There are feelings:

Sadness—you are aware someone else has passed to enable you to have the gift of sight.

Gratitude—to those who made the ultimate decision at such a difficult time in their life.

Thankfulness—to my donors for giving me a gift which will always be remembered

I have learned that since being diagnosed with a corneal disease, the reason not many grafts were performed was that there was no medium to store the cornea until transplantation. Over the years such a storage medium has been developed.

It has been seven years since my last graft and I recently visited my wonderful ophthalmologist, who is very pleased with my progress. I love my glasses, love life and will always be grateful for my very precious gifts.

Melissa.