



VITAL SERVICE: Rosies co-ordinator Lyall Forde and Doctor Sharmila Biswas.

Picture: BRENDAN RADKE

Charity group appeals for new wheels

ANIKA HUME

A CAIRNS doctor is pleading for community help to raise \$50,000 for a new food van to cater for the city's growing number of homeless people.

Australian Medical Association Queensland Councillor Dr Sharmila Biswas said she had already received two generous donations towards her bid to

fund a replacement local Rosies van, but she was now calling on residents to pitch in the rest.

The 20-year-old Rosies van provides a vital food service to about 80 homeless people three nights a week, but volunteer Clare Burns said it was now rusty, clunky and deteriorated to the point of regular breakdowns.

"At the moment we're just

scraping by, but we know in the long run we need to improve efficiencies to make sure it's safe for volunteers," she said.

"If we don't have a van that meets occupational health and safety standards, we can't continue our service."

Dr Biswas said she heard of the need after spending time with Rosies herself, and she also hoped to buy the charity a

van with an awning to keep its meal serving station dry.

"We're appealing to the public to think about these people in austere times and give whatever they can donate, because if we get a good van, we can service a number of people who are really desperate," she said.

Donations can be made at amaqfoundation.com.au or through rosies.org.au