

Plea for help for wildlife rescuers

Bushfires | Michelle Carnovale

A MONASH wildlife carer has put out a desperate plea for community help to prepare for the fire season.

South Oakleigh Wildlife Shelter owner Michele Phillips said she needed to raise about \$10,000 to update the uniforms and equipment of her fire rescue unit, after changes to the "protocols" as a result of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.

Ms Phillips said she was re-

sponsible for supplying uniforms for her team, which included overalls, helmets, gloves, a two-way radio for every five members and GPS tracking devices. She must also buy first-aid tents, trestle tables, fold-up chairs and baskets to carry animals.

Volunteers would supply their own shoes, which, under the new protocols, must be steel-capped and made to withstand burning embers and coal on the ground.

Ms Phillips said she had bought new uniforms earlier this year

with a grant from Glen Eira Council but was unsure whether she would be able to secure funding from a council or government department for the other outfits.

The wildlife rescuer said she established the fire unit about six years ago with a team of other wildlife carers, all volunteers, to help injured animals in the event of a bushfire.

The team played an important role in treating and rescuing injured animals after the Black Saturday bushfires but Ms Phil-

lips said all the equipment and uniforms her crew had worn then did not meet the new safety requirements.

"Everything has to be fire-certified and it will be safer, so it's a good thing," Ms Phillips said. "But each uniform is going to cost me about \$600."

She will hold a sausage sizzle outside Bunnings Warehouse, 1126 Centre Rd, Oakleigh South, on October 29, 9am-3pm, to raise money.

To support Ms Phillips and her fire unit, phone 0411 600 591.