

Bargain clothing flies off the racks

By COURTNEY TRENWITH

FORGET fancy department stores, it was a simple community sale that sent hundreds of Illawarra shoppers into a fashion frenzy at the weekend.

More than 300 people - of all shapes, sizes and ages - battled the crowds at Thirroul Community Centre to pick up a bargain at the first free clothes swap event run by Sustainable Illawarra on Saturday.

The idea was simple: people brought along up to six items of clothing they didn't want any more and exchanged them for tokens, which they then used to purchase other people's cast-offs.

The bargain hunters not only saved their bank balance, they also helped reduce waste.

Sustainable Illawarra project manager Dee Topic said the response was "unbelievable".

"It was like your David Jones half-yearly sale ... it was four-people deep," Ms Topic said.

"It was like a crazy house."

A pair of Bollywood-style pants, a marble-wash leather jacket and even a ski suit passed the till.

"There were some really good garments and some not so good," Ms Topic said.

"Some people said even if they only found one thing it was worth coming."

Sustainable Illawarra says Australians spend \$14 billion on new clothes each year.

About 382 billion litres of water per year is used in the production of new clothes, many of which are not biodegradable and end up in landfill.

"Consumption is one of the biggest ecological contributions to an individual's footprint," Ms Topic said.

Unsold clothes were either given to Scraggs on the Beach op shop in Thirroul or donated to St Vincent de Paul's Society.

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Early birds: Jenny Webster and Maree Jordan, with her daughters Sophie Stanford, 5, and Laura Stanford, 3, got in early to find a bargain at the Thirroul clothes swap event. Picture: KEN ROBERTSON