HOT TOPIC

I acknowledge the concerns of
Barb Ashby and Mike Anderson
about Australia not signing the
Kyoto Protocol (Letters, March 25).

Take hope from the words of
South African President Thabo
Mbeki, in a speech marking the
opening ceremony of the World
Summit on Sustainable Develop-
ment taking place this week in
Johannesburg.

"As we deliberate and work on a
way forward, we need to take stock
of the inertia of the past decade
and agree on very clear and
practical measures that will help
us to deal decisively with all the
challenges that we face.

"This is the central task of this
summit. We do not have a new
agenda to discover. We have no
obligation to return to what we
already knew about the perversities
of development, society and the
environment. There is no need to
repeat the same mistakes we have
been fighting and resolving.

"There is every need for us to
demonstrate to the billions of
people we lead that we are com-
mitted to the future and principles
of human solidarity, that we do not
accept that the human society
should be constructed on the basis of
a geography of the survival of the
fittest.

"I say this with a leader.

"The fact that there is global
warming and it has been caused
primarily by human-made green
includes carbon dioxide is not disputed
by SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

most scientists. That something
must be done is also not an issue and
very few, even those who claim there is no
long-term climate change, disagree with the
objec-
tive of sustainability. What is
holding up the process is the cost.

"Unfortunately, environmental
analysts date show that it will be
far more expensive to cut carbon
dioxide emissions radically than to
pay the costs of adapting to the
increased temperatures. All cur-
rent models show that the Kyoto
Protocol will have surprisingly
little impact on the climate.

"Temperature levels projected for
$100 billion for all of six
years. Yet the cost of the Kyoto
Protocol will be $10 billion to
$300 billion annually (compared to
$50 billion in global annual develop-
ment aid).

"With global warming impending
imperatively affecting Third World
countries, the question arises as
to whether the Kyoto agreement
is the best way to solve the
environmental dilemma. For example, for the cost
of Kyoto as it is for just one year we could solve
the world's biggest problem: we could provide
every person in the world with clean
water.

"This alone would save two mil-
lion lives each year and protect
500 million from severe disease.

"In fact, for the same amount
Kyoto could have met just the
United States every year, the
United Nations estimates we could
could provide every person in the
world with access to basic health,
education, family planning and
water and sanitation services.

"So given the current perception
that sustainability is at a cost,
there does not appear a way out of
the dilemma. We therefore need to
change the paradigm. Ways need
to be found to make progress
towards sustainable economic
benefit.

"To get much more out of much
less, to produce more with less
impact on the greater environ-
ment and so on. That more re-
sources are required unless we
fundamentally reduce our popula-
tion is difficult to dispute. The
challenge is to find ways to use
resources in a sustainable man-
ner. To get much more out of much
less, to produce more with less
impact on the greater environ-
ments and so on.

"Science got us into the situation
and sound science can get us out
again. A good place to initiate new
sustainable technologies is in our
own backyards. Our footprint on
earth is the built environment and
this accounts for around 40 per-
cent of all greenhouse gases, emis-
sions and energy consumption.

"Any change toward sustainabil-
ity would therefore have a huge
impact. The carbon based Techko
summer is a great start. What they promise is a
shift to using carbon as a building
material.

"Only when people are rich
dough to find themselves do they
begin to think about the effect of
their actions on the world around
them and on future generations.

A focus on ways of achieving
sustainable development with
positive economic outcomes will help
teach today, not just tomorrow as the Third World
will become much more concerned
about the environment.

John Horlitz
10.25.05
Glenochy