



class of 1903.

Mr Balmer soon discovered a big problem: residents were felling timber on the school block to sell. He acted swiftly to stop this nonsense and the current magnificent stand of eucalypts and conifers is probably attributable to his determination in the matter.

The result is a school which not only has the ubiquitous of oval, parking, toilets, shelter, rebound wall, courts, and so on, but also boasts a rare beauty which has on more than one occasion attracted Melbourne schools keen to visit a "model country school".

The Murdoch brothers recall in their 1960s schooldays spotting koalas and echidnas within the school grounds and even today, every playtime is a virtual "nature walk" for the children.

Among its curriculum listings is "bush cooking" and there could scarcely be a subject more relevant to the setting.

Now though, it seems all this might be going. In cold terms, Mandurang South No.1628 is listed as having an estimated worth — "including water, all buildings and improvements" — of between \$50,000 and \$70,000. It seems a pittance for such a noble piece of land.

Yet unless parents are willing to risk the uncertainties of a heavily reduced staffing roster, it seems that the harsh economic reality of 1993 might be about to sweep the school away and deposit its remnants "3½ miles" down the road at Mandurang.

The worst part of that though, according to the less optimistic, is that it could be but the beginning of the end of school in the picturesque Mandurang valley. Government ministers have signalled that this is only Year One of a three-year reformation of state education.

This year Mandurang South, next year ... Mandurang itself?

No one can be sure of that scenario, and Wayne Matthews doubts that it would be politically possible to carry out, but the chill winds of change are blowing hard in the Mandurang valley.