Minister for Lands, Tony Kelly, has refused an Aboriginal land claim over a public reserve at Kootingal which had delayed local plans to re-locate the Kootingal and District Preschool.

“I’ve been advised this is the only suitable public land available for the proposed relocation,” the Minister said.

“I have refused this land claim as the land is not claimable within the meaning of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983.

“The reserve has a public hall and a toilet block and is clearly required for essential purposes, which rules the claim out under the Act.

“The reserve is managed by Tamworth Regional Council which has developed the reserve’s facilities and supports this decision.

“The land is an integral part of the community’s flood and stormwater management as well as a popular recreational site for the Kootingal community.

“The Sandy Creek corridor has also been identified as part of the national bird route.”