The potential for devastating flood damage in Alice Springs will be dramatically reduced with $880,000 allocated in the Government's 2002/03 Budget to the construction of a retardation basin upstream of the Lovegrove drainage channel, west of the town.

The Minister for Central Australia, Dr Peter Toyne, said the vital flood measure was recommended six years ago, and long overdue.

"The CLP was presented with this proposal in 1996 in a floodplain management plan, but failed to do anything about it," said Dr Toyne.

"I'm pleased to say the Martin Government is finally acting for the people of Alice Springs, and spending money to adequately protect lives, homes and businesses.

"Alice Springs is surrounded by flood plains, and in the past, has been inundated by floodwaters that have resulted in the tragic loss of life and property."

Dr Toyne said the retardation basin will eliminate any risk of the existing Lovegrove drain overflowing, even in the extreme case of a 1 in 100-year flood.

Sacred site clearance has been obtained for the area from the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, with Native Title negotiations continuing.

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to the top