Chief Minister Clare Martin today announced a $2.2 million commitment to the further development of Central Australia as a centre of knowledge.

In next month’s Territory Budget, the Government will commit the funds for headworks at the Desert Knowledge Precinct at the Arid Zone Farm area in Alice Springs.

The Government today also introduced legislation to establish a statutory corporation to be known as Desert Knowledge Australia – an umbrella body to facilitate and promote the development of numerous initiatives for social and economic growth in desert Australia.

Ms Martin said there were now unprecedented opportunities, through 'new economy' industries, for the development and sharing of knowledge and skills in Central Australia.

"Our science and technology capacity is crucial to our ability to participate in new global industries, as well as to continuously improve the more familiar ones," she said.

"Desert Knowledge initiatives are all about creating and sustaining new partnerships and alliances for research and development.

"The headworks will see the start of work on the provision of essential services to the site such as power, water reticulation and roads. Tenders have already been advertised for the preliminary work and construction is expected to begin within the next few months.

"The precinct will include the Desert People’s Centre and the headquarters of Desert Knowledge Australia."

Another important part of this overall project is the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC), a $94 million program, which won funding last December from the Commonwealth of $20 million over seven years. This Centre will work to a comprehensive vision and business plan for collaborative research and development in Desert Australia.

The CRC headquarters will also be located at the Precinct.

Future initiatives for the Precinct include a Graduate School in Desert Knowledge, an International Desert Innovation Centre and a cultural centre.