

Perron denies rift developing in CLP

Chief Minister Marshall Perron has denied a rift is developing between the CLP parliamentary and organisational wings.

Mr Perron admitted yesterday that party members were "down in the mouth" about the CLP's Federal election failure.

He claimed the Federal election loss, the latest in a series of political outs by the Government, would not give rise to a groundswell from within CLP branches against sitting members.

"I strongly support all endorsed sitting members," Mr Perron said.

By SENIOR POLITICAL REPORTER FRED McCUE

But Mr Perron has admitted the next Territory election posed the greatest test the party had ever faced during its time in office.

Despite Mr Perron's comments, there appears to be growing evidence of anxiety within the CLP organisational wing about the party's prospects at the next election.

A number senior figures within the CLP organisational wing have indicated that unless there are changes made at the parliamentary level, the CLP will struggle to maintain its grip on power at the next election.

"There are four MLA's that have

to go," one said. "We recognise things are wrong.

"If they don't make changes they will be down the tubes."

A senior member of another branch spoke of the need for "sacrificial blood".

He went on to talk of "ferment at the branch level".

Mr Perron said any pre-selection challenges against sitting members would be part of the CLP's normal pre-election process.

"My seat has been contested on all occasions," he said.

Mr Perron said the media "is

reading too much into" last Friday's meetings between himself and both the management committee and Darwin branch chairmen.

The meetings, in particular with branch chairmen, were interpreted as significant indications of growing concern within the party structure.

Mr Perron said both were normal meetings that had happened to fall on the same day.

"There is a bit of a down-in-the-mouth feeling but that's pretty natural given that we performed badly at the Federal election," he said.

"Clearly the CLP Government and the party wing are concerned.

"But I don't think there is any chasm developing."