The Martin Government has no mandate to change the manner by which council mayors are elected, says the Territory Opposition.

"Once again the rights of local communities are being trampled on by the Martin Government," says Jodeen Carney, Leader of the Opposition.

"I suspect people like voting for the mayor as a separate office and I'm sure they should be asked before any changes to their rights are made.

The draft Local Government Bill will allow the councils to choose whether aldermen or the people can elect the mayor.

"The Martin Government doesn't understand it does not have the right, and nor do the councils, to alter voting procedures for positions currently elected directly by the people.

"It is incredibly arrogant of the Martin Government to presume it can axe direct elections for the position of mayor without putting the changes before the people.

"I'm also concerned that the proposed changes will lead to greater party political influence of councils; as is the case in many other parts of Australia.

"Allowing the alderman to choose the mayor will encourage political alliances amongst them. From there it's a short step to ALP or CLP dominated councils.

"The prize of mayor will become the prize object for backroom operators of the major parties.

"In the wheeling and dealing for mayor, it's the interests of the community that is most likely to be forgotten.

"I prefer the current situation where local councils don't line up along party lines.

"The Martin Government needs to put the Local Government reform process on hold, start again, consult the people of the Territory properly and then put their plans for council amalgamations before the people at the next Territory election."

To arrange further comment : Greg Charter 04000 14 059