



Senator has LNP divided

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QUEENSLAND Senator-elect Barry O'Sullivan has been invited to take on an informal role working on a key Federal Government policy despite facing a corruption inquiry that has delayed his entrance to Parliament.

In a move that threatens to ignite tensions within the Liberal National Party, federal Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce has engineered a plan for Mr O'Sullivan to conduct research for the Federal Government's Agriculture White Paper even though the State Government has not yet endorsed him as a Senator.

But some senior members of the LNP are pushing for Mr O'Sullivan to "graciously step down" and allow the party to endorse another senator.

Mr O'Sullivan, a former LNP treasurer was anointed to take over Mr Joyce's plum Senate spot after the now Agriculture Minister moved to the Lower House.

But his preselection opened bitter tensions within the party, with some powerful members of the party unsuccessfully trying to block his appointment.

An obstacle to his promotion emerged this year after *The Courier-Mail* published secret recordings of negotiations for state MP Bruce Flegg to retire to make way for then Brisbane lord mayor Campbell





Newman to enter State Parliament in 2011.

Mr Newman has so far refused to endorse Mr O'Sullivan until he is cleared by the Crime and Misconduct Commission, which is investigating allegations that Mr Flegg was offered inducements to resign.

The CMC inquiry may not be finished until the end of the year or later, meaning Queensland will be down a senator when Parliament resumes this month.

Mr O'Sullivan's absence will also be a blow to the National Party because they will be down a voice in the Coalition joint party room and could make it harder for them to argue against policies such as paid parental leave.

Despite advice from the acting Clerk of the Senate that there was nothing in the Constitution preventing Mr O'Sullivan taking up his seat, the Queensland Government says it has different advice and will

wait for the CMC findings before endorsing him.

But Mr Joyce and Queensland Nationals Senator Ron Boswell have broken ranks with their state counterparts

and called for Mr O'Sullivan to be allowed to sit in Parliament.

"If he's sitting in his room at home, he's no use to anyone," Mr Joyce said.

Mr O'Sullivan welcomed the role and said he had no hard feelings about being locked out of Parliament.

"I'm confident that matters will sort themselves through in the near term," he said.