

## IASA's 10-Year Celebration

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### **The DMM: Building cultural change in Australian child protection practice.**

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Topic: Clinical practice

Changing the culture in any organisation is hard. Changing the culture in a Child Protection Service can be glacial. The legal obligations that govern the work of Child Protection are stringent and rightly so. However, for many decades now, cuts to funding, an increased focus on risk and greater individual accountability and liability of workers has led to 'downstream thinking'. This reactionary and blame-focused culture has become pervasive.

The organisational culture parallels the way that Child Protection engages with the families they are meant to work alongside. Child Protection are often reported to be punitive and blaming of families, engaging in knee-jerk decision-making based on perceived risk, and seek greater accountability from families than ever before. Many have described the culture of Child Protection as toxic and unchanging.

Clearly though, Child Protection plays a fundamental role in our society. Protecting vulnerable children and supporting families in need. It's a vital service that has become sick. To use 'DMM speak', it is a service that may be using maladaptive strategies.

#### **How it used the DMM**

One year ago, Fran left her clinical position as a Child and Adolescent Mental Health clinician and entered into the world of adult education, providing professional development to the Child Protection sector. Although it is very early days, Fran is using the DMM to create cultural change, returning workers to the importance of relational approaches to practice that are underscored by re-building worker curiosity, creativity, reflection and care.

#### **What it can contribute to the DMM**

In this paper, Fran shares and reflects on her experience of introducing the DMM to Child Protection, and the subsequent impacts that the DMM has had on work practice and teams within the Child Protection system in Victoria, Australia.