

Dear Anna,

Reflecting on my time at Lá: lem te Baker, I see how those four years profoundly shaped who I am today. My name is Anna, and I began calling Lá: lem te Baker home in September 2018. Today, I work as a support worker at a crisis centre, where I'm dedicated to helping others who find themselves in moments of crisis or facing life's challenges. The experiences I had at Lá: lem te Baker deeply influence my work now, grounding me in purpose and empathy.

If I could offer my younger self any advice from those days, it would be to trust in your journey, no matter how uncertain or daunting it feels. The fear of not knowing where you belonged, the loneliness of being in a new country, and the constant effort to stay afloat in an unfamiliar environment taught you resilience, compassion, and the ability to look beyond immediate challenges to see the possibilities that lie ahead. Those hardships and doubts taught me the importance of stepping out of my comfort zone, taking risks, seeking help when needed, and engaging with new people to learn from their experiences.

One of the most transformative moments during my time at Lá: lem te Baker was working as a Community Housing Ambassador. This role allowed me to support students, build meaningful connections, and learn from a wonderful team. It not only broadened my horizons and deepened my empathy but also helped me make lifelong friends who became like family. These connections continue to provide invaluable support and a deep sense of belonging in my life today.

Working, studying, and engaging with enthusiastic peers at Lá: lem te Baker pushed me to step out of my comfort zone, seize opportunities, and never settle for less than what brings fulfilment. The experience taught me to embrace uncertainty, and stay proactive and open to new possibilities. It encouraged me to take bold steps, such as switching careers or moving to remote areas, in search of what truly brings me joy. These lessons have been transformative, significantly shaping my personal and professional growth.

To new residents at Lá: lem te Baker, I want to say: Keep believing in yourself. The journey might be tough, and not every challenge will come with an obvious opportunity for growth, but don't give up. You have the strength to overcome, and you're not alone. It's okay to feel down—just remember that support is available. Allow yourself to feel your emotions, experience the pain, and use it as a stepping stone to become stronger.

Looking ahead, I'm excited to reconnect with my roots in biology, the field I earned my degree in. While continuing my advocacy for mental health, I'm exploring ways to combine my passion for science with my commitment to helping others. I see myself potentially becoming a genetic counsellor or even pursuing a path as a doctor, focusing on mental health. This is an exciting time of exploration, and I'm eager to see where this journey takes me next.

With love, hope, and care,

Anna