

During the short vacation work period, I was allowed by the University to join the Community Build to gain hands-on exposure to construction activities. I was excited about the chance to learn outside the classroom and put theory into practice. This role demanded enthusiasm, extra hours, and an open mindset to fully appreciate the realities of site work.

The build was in Strand, which required early mornings during a period we should be resting but I was willing to sacrifice. Arriving on site, I immediately sensed the difference between theoretical training and practical execution. Construction sites are fast-paced, physically demanding, and safety-driven environments where learning occurs through both observation and active participation.

The first task I was assigned to was assisting with the removal of defective concrete. Using a jackhammer, I helped loosen concrete around a reinforcement cage. Once the surface layer was broken, we used shovels to remove the material from beneath the cage. This activity exposed me to the physical intensity of site work and the close integration of tools, labour, and engineering design.

Unfortunately, I experienced an accident during this activity. A treated wooden pole supporting part of the cage failed and the cage fell on top of my hand causing it to cut my pink finger. I was lucky that I was wearing gloves which may have saved my finger. The injury required immediate attention, and I was sent to a clinic for assessment. After an X-ray confirmed there was no fracture, I received three stitches to close the wound.

Although I was relieved the injury was not more severe, it meant I could not return to site for the remainder of the week. The days that followed were painful, and I had to focus on recovery rather than active participation. While this incident was disappointing, it provided me with valuable insights into the realities of safety, risk, and resilience in construction. It reinforced why risk assessments, inspections, and PPE are critical at every stage of work. In this case, although my injury was relatively minor, it could have been much worse, reminding me that construction is inherently high-risk and must be approached with caution and respect.

Despite the setback, I remain grateful for the opportunity. The incident taught me resilience and adaptability, showing that even challenges can be valuable learning moments. While I missed further hands-on exposure that week, I gained a deeper understanding of site safety culture and the importance of protecting both people and progress.