

2025 NEAS CONFERENCE
Aerial UTS Function Centre - Sydney



Stateless to Belonging

Mehdi Sina, A Personal Journey

Pathways to Belonging

Our Role in Building Communities

22-23 MAY
2025



Intro!

- Welcome to Country
- Thank the NEAS Australia
- Honored to share my story.

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A Stateless Beginning

- Born in Afghanistan during civil war
- Grew up in Pakistan, lived without nationality
- Felt invisible and disconnected from community



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Surviving, Not Living

- Lived in constant survival mode
- Enrolled in school under fake names
- Parents believed education was our only way out
- Father Passed away, I had to take the lead and responsibilities
- Worked as rug maker

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Survival Mode

- Living day-by-day
- No room for dreams—just survival
- Realization: something had to change



Seeking Asylum

- Left everything behind
- Journey full of fear, uncertainty & risk
- Sought identity and belonging



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This Risky & Dangerous Journey

- Played by people smuggler
- Crossing borders, escaping police
- Nearly drowned in a river
- Prayed in the storm while stranded at sea
- Escaped across borders, faced near-death moments
- Arrival at Christmas Island marked a new beginning
- Failed multiple attempts
- Boarded a boat to Australia — 70+ hours at sea

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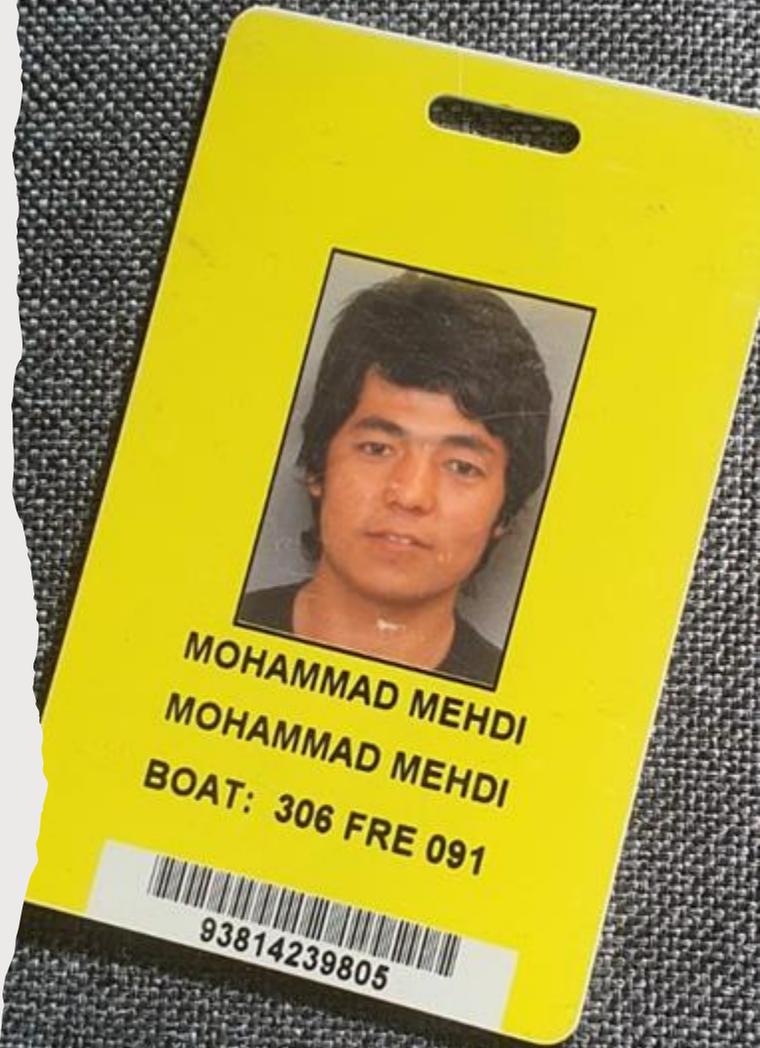




Arrival in Australia

- Arrival in Australia
- Detention challengers
- Identity crisis
- Communication challengers
 - Feel lost between 2 cultures
 - Still switches between English and Hazaragi Culture

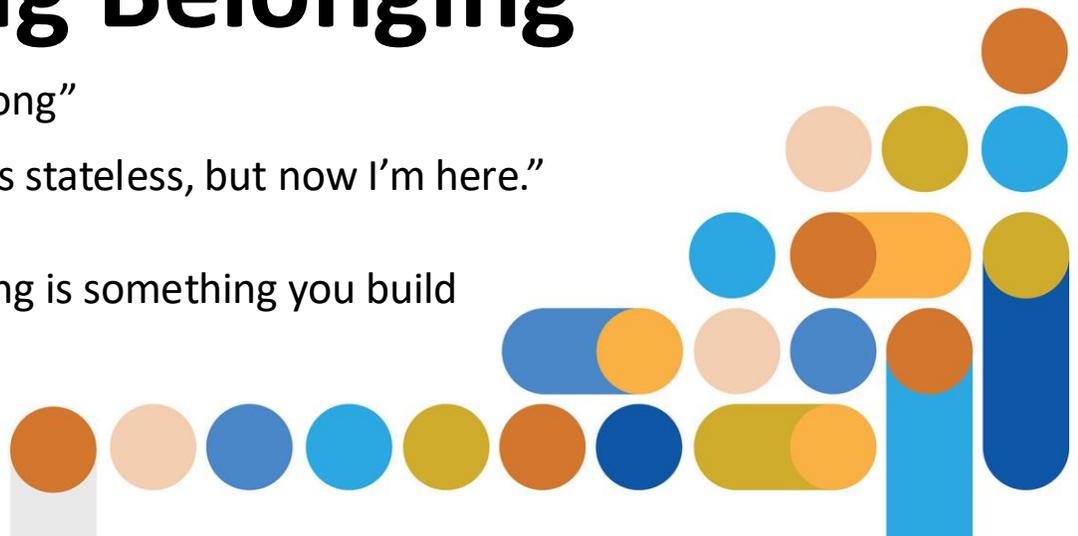
First ever Australian ID Card





Discovering Belonging

- Finally able to say “I belong”
- Identity interview: “I was stateless, but now I’m here.”
- Discovered that belonging is something you build



Giving back to Community

- Uplift women & marginalised voices
- Use my journey to empower others
- Stories change narratives—and lives

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Final Message & Thanks

- No matter where you come from, you can rise
- With hope and resilience, anything is possible
- Grow as little as 1% each day

Thank you for listening

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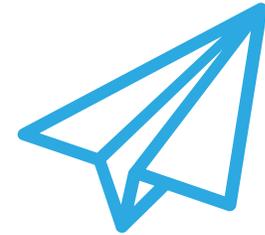




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