MOLLY & MOBARAK

A young refugee from Afghanistan Mobarak Tahiri finds work in a small Australian country town and falls in love with local girl Molly.

Mobarak is one of 3,500 illegal boat people from the Hazara ethnic minority who arrived on the coast of Northern Australia between 1999 and 2001 fleeing persecution from the Taliban. After spending months in detention most Hazaras were found to be genuine refugees and released on 3-year Temporary Protection Visas.

At the start of 2002 a group of refugees, one of whom is Mobarak, arrive in Young, a small town 4 hours drive from Sydney. Unlike most Australian country towns, Young is thriving. The local meat-works is expanding its business and desperately short of workers.

Mobarak shares an apartment with fellow refugees, and takes English lessons organized by local volunteers.   One of these is Lyn Rule, a single mother with a teenage son and a 25-year-old daughter, Molly. Lyn befriends Mobarak, and Molly offers to teach him how to drive. From this relationship love blossoms, at least on Mobarak's side.

Young is a typical small town where opinions are divided between those eager to help assimilate the newcomers, and those who fall back on racist attitudes. Ironically, it was in Young in the middle of the last century, that riots against Chinese miners occurred. The miners were driven out of town.

When Molly goes off on a trip to Europe, Mobarak is disconsolate, though Lyn treats him almost as though he were another son. He suddenly leaves town but when Molly returns, he also comes back to Young hoping the romance will be re-kindled.

A combination of a heightened fear of terrorism and changing management at the meat-works causes a resurgence of racism in the town. Meanwhile time is running out for Mobarak. His visa will soon expire and he is terrified of returning to his small village outside Kabul convinced he will be either robbed or stoned to death by the Mullahs – once people know he has tasted life in the west.

Digi-beta, or Betacam SP 85 mins
Producer/director: Tom Zubrycki