



From Sparky to Smarter Solar

**Alex's journey into solar
and why he built Smarter Solar**

CANBERRA & REGIONAL NSW



I came to solar as an electrician.

I'm Alex, a licensed electrician working in solar across Canberra and regional NSW. What drew me in was the technology. Here was a part of the trade that was new, different and moving quickly.

Solar brought together practical electrical work, system design and increasingly smart equipment. It gave me something substantial to learn, with a result people could use every day.

I could see why it mattered to households. I wanted to understand it properly and be part of delivering it.

**The technology got my attention.
The people gave it purpose.**

The trade was opening up.

The appeal went well beyond putting panels on a roof. Inverters were becoming smarter. Batteries could store energy for later. Monitoring made it possible to see what a system was doing.

As adoption grew, solar became part of a wider conversation about how a home uses electricity. Heating, hot water, cars and backup power all started to connect.

For an electrician, that was exciting. The work called for an understanding of the whole system, and the decisions behind it.

**There was more to design.
More to understand.
More to get right.**

I did the study. I earned the credentials.

I completed the technical study and certificates in grid-connected PV and battery systems. My accreditation journey included the Clean Energy Council, or CEC, and now Solar Accreditation Australia, or SAA.

I hold a current electrical licence with a DER endorsement, and current SAA accreditation. Those qualifications underpin the work I do.

They also carry a responsibility: keep learning, understand the equipment and be able to explain the decisions behind a system.

Electrical licence + DER endorsement

Grid-connected PV + battery certificates

CEC background + current SAA accreditation

Around 1,000 solar installations.

Across approximately 1,000 solar system installations, I've had the chance to see solar from the practical side: the roofs, the equipment, the installation work and the conversations with homeowners.

That experience changes the questions you ask. What does this household actually need? How will they use the system? What will they understand once the job is finished?

An installation is a technical job. It is also something a person has paid for, placed their trust in and expects to live with for years.

Experience made the customer's side of the job harder to ignore.

It was about more than a power bill.

People wanted lower electricity costs, but that wasn't the whole story. There was the appeal of cleaner energy and making use of the sunlight falling on their own roof.

There was also independence: producing more of their own power and relying less on the grid. For some households, battery storage and properly designed backup added another reason to act.

Those are understandable goals. They deserve a system designed around them, with a clear explanation of what it can deliver and where its limits are.

People wanted more control over their energy.

Every home brought a different question.

Working across Canberra and regional NSW reinforced something simple: households do not all use energy in the same way.

A family's winter heating, someone working from home, an electric car or an existing solar system can change the conversation. So can the roof, shading, electrical supply and budget.

The address matters. The people living there matter just as much. I wanted the recommendation to make sense when you put those things together.



Keeping up became part of the job.

The technology kept moving. New products arrived, capabilities changed and the combinations of panels, inverters, batteries and chargers became more varied.

Installers had to keep learning while still running jobs. Homeowners were trying to make a major decision without the same technical background.

Someone could research solar, step away for a while and return to a different set of options. I could see how easy it was for information to become outdated, incomplete or hard to apply.

Progress is useful only when people can make sense of it.

WHAT I FOUND

There was information everywhere.

You could find product brochures, blogs, videos, calculators, sales offers and plenty of opinions. Finding something to read was easy.

Working out which information mattered to your own home was much harder. One source explained panels. Another explained batteries. A third recommended a system without making the reasoning clear.

The homeowner was left to join those pieces together. Often, they were being asked to do that before they even knew which questions to ask.



WHAT I FOUND

The missing piece was the connection.

A person could understand what a battery does and still have no idea whether they needed one. They could learn about panel efficiency and still not know how many panels suited their home.

That was the gap I kept coming back to. General information was available, but the connection between that information and a household's circumstances was often weak.

The useful question was becoming clear: how do we help people turn what they learn into a decision they can explain?

**What does this mean
for my home?**

I saw the cowboy end of the industry.

I came across poor work and recommendations that did not appear to fit the household. There were promises that were easier to make than to explain properly.

That frustrated me as an electrician. A customer should be able to trust the advice, the installation and the person responsible for it.

There are good people doing careful work in solar. But the cowboy end of the industry damages confidence in everyone, including the installers who take their responsibilities seriously.

**A poor job leaves more than
a technical problem.
It leaves distrust.**

Good installers felt it too.

When people are unsure whom to trust, every conversation becomes harder. A careful explanation can sound like another sales pitch. A sensible quote can be difficult to distinguish from a misleading one.

Installers then spend time unpicking confusion before they can have a useful conversation about the job.

I wanted a better starting point for both sides: homeowners who understood their needs, and installers who could show how their proposed system responded to them.

Trust needs something concrete to be built on.

A sale could happen before clarity did.

There were plenty of people selling systems. Yet I still encountered homeowners who were unsure what they had bought or why that particular equipment had been recommended.

They might know a brand name or a battery size without understanding what it meant in daily use. The paperwork and the sales conversation had not always resolved that uncertainty.

That stayed with me. Agreeing to a price should come with a clear understanding of the system, its purpose and its limits.

**Knowing the product name
is only the beginning.**

The panels were up. The questions remained.

Sometimes the installation was finished and the homeowner was still unsure. Was the system working as expected? What could the battery run? What would happen in a blackout?

Those are basic ownership questions. People should feel comfortable asking them and should receive answers they can understand.

Seeing that uncertainty after a job made me think differently about completion. The equipment being installed and the customer feeling confident were two things that needed to come together.

The job should end with understanding.

The last conversation mattered.

An inadequate handover can leave a good system feeling like a mystery. An app has been installed, some documents have been provided, and the homeowner is expected to take it from there.

People need to understand how to monitor their system, what normal operation looks like and who to contact if something seems wrong. Backup capability, where included, needs a clear explanation too.

That final conversation helps turn installed equipment into something the household can use with confidence.



Sometimes the doubt was justified.

Some homeowners wondered whether the system they had was right for them. From the technical side, I could sometimes see why.

Equipment can be capable in its own right and still be poorly matched to a household's use, expectations or priorities. The reasoning behind the recommendation matters.

I kept thinking about how much better that conversation could be before the purchase. People needed a way to understand their requirements early enough to question the proposed design.

The right questions need to come before the commitment.



THE TURNING POINT

I kept coming back to one question.

What if people could work out what their home needed before they started comparing systems and quotes?

They could learn the relevant concepts, answer questions about their own circumstances and see those answers turn into a personal plan.

That felt like a practical response to what I was seeing. It would give the homeowner something useful to take into the conversation, and give the installer a clearer place to begin.

**Before you get quotes,
find out what your home
actually needs.**

That became Smarter Solar.

I developed Smarter Solar out of that experience: the attraction of the technology, the work on the tools and the gaps I could see in the customer's experience.

I wanted to bring useful education, household information and the necessary calculations into one guided process.

The aim was straightforward. Help people understand their options and arrive at a clearer picture of their needs before they make a major decision. Then help carry that understanding through the rest of the journey.



Make the information useful at the right moment.

I wanted people to learn as they worked through their plan. A question about when they use electricity should help them understand why timing matters. A question about backup should help clarify what they expect to keep running.

That makes the education relevant to a decision they are actually making.

The idea is to guide people through the important questions in a sensible order, with explanations that help them answer honestly and understand what follows.

Learn something.
Apply it to your home.
Keep moving.



START WITH THE HOUSEHOLD

The home comes first.

Smarter Solar starts with the things that shape the requirement: energy use, when that energy is used, the roof, existing equipment, priorities and future plans.

An electric car, a change in heating or a desire for backup can affect what a person needs. Those details belong in the conversation early.

Bringing the inputs together makes it easier to see the household as a whole. It also gives a recommendation something clear to be based on.

Your circumstances should shape your solar plan.

Let the technology do useful work.

Smarter Solar uses those inputs to calculate and explain a proposed solar system size, including the number of panels, and to consider battery, EV charging and backup needs.

The value is in connecting the calculation to the person. Why this size? What need is it responding to? What should be discussed with the installer?

The personal plan provides that starting point. The installer then checks the site, confirms the assumptions and develops the final design.

A recommendation should come with a reason.

Come to the installer informed.

I want the homeowner to be able to explain what matters to them and understand the response. That creates room for a much better discussion about equipment, design and trade-offs.

It helps the installer too. A clearer brief means less guessing about the customer's priorities and more time discussing a suitable solution.

Smarter Solar brings the personal plan into that conversation and helps connect consumers with vetted installers. The aim is an informed customer and a productive next step.



Compare what is actually being offered.

Different quotes can reflect different equipment, installation work, warranties and support. The headline price does not explain those differences on its own.

I wanted consumers to have a reference point: their personal plan, alongside a Quotes checklist that helps them look at the details and ask questions.

They should be able to see where a proposal meets their needs, where it differs and what still needs explaining. That gives them a better basis for making a choice.

Confidence comes from understanding the differences.

The story continues after installation.

The post-installation checklist matters because the handover matters. People need to know what to check, what to ask and how to get help.

Smarter Solar also seeks feedback about the installation, handover and the service and support that follow. That brings the customer's experience back into the picture.

I want good work to be recognised and gaps to become visible. Listening after the job is one way the whole experience can improve, for homeowners and the installers serving them.

**The customer's experience
should help improve the next one.**



ALEX'S REASON

I still believe in what solar can do.

The technology is what first drew me in. The opportunity for people to use cleaner energy, gain more control and rely less on the grid still matters to me.

What I want to improve is the experience around it: the understanding before a purchase, the confidence in the design and the support after installation.

That's why I built Smarter Solar. It brings what I've learned as a sparkie into a tool that helps people take their next step with a clearer idea of what they need.

Alex

Electrician & founder, Smarter Solar

Start your free plan
smartersolar.au