



SHIFTING THE LIMITS

## INTERVIEW WITH JACK LONG

Mr. Long has been working within the PV industry since 2009, beginning in customer service and sales with Energy Matters. His passion for renewables and technical knowledge saw him advance into the technical side of the business several years ago. Mr. Long currently holds a technical support role as an Applications Engineer for Flex.

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### / What do you love most about your job?

One of the main things that I love about my job is being able to work within an industry that I am passionate about, alongside likeminded people who share the same passion. I enjoy the practical side of my role and the challenge of troubleshooting technical issues. Assisting clients to make the transition to solar and storage is another plus for me.

### / What is your background with Fronius?

I started selling the Fronius IG model inverters back in 2009 with Energy Matters, and over time learnt all about Fronius as a company. A few years later I was inevitably drawn to the Fronius SnapINverter range of inverters with the release of the Fronius Galvo and Fronius Symo ranges. I remember having a passionate discussion with Fronius Managing Director, Adrian Noronho one fateful afternoon at an exhibition, from which I never looked back. The release of the Fronius Primo further cemented my interest.

### / Tell us about working with Fronius. What has your experience been like?

I deal with Fronius products day-in-day-out, fielding technical enquires for installers, sales representatives and end users. I am constantly learning about and discovering new features of the product, which drives my passion. My overall experience has been very positive, as I know how passionate Fronius is as a company in regards to 'shifting the limits'. This is clearly evident in their products and support that they offer.

### / You have been a Fronius Service Partner (FSP) for more than six years. What's been the most valuable thing about being an FSP for you?

The most valuable thing to me would be knowing there is solid back-of-house support at Fronius Australia; knowing we can recommend a quality product with a solid support network coupled with a good warranty program.

Some time ago a customer called me advising that their system was getting a STATE 102 fault, which means the AC voltage is too high. I was able to look up the site on our Solar.web portal and identify the issue. I made contact with the installer and arranged a service visit to site for the next day to activate the 'voltage dependent power reduction' feature - in Queensland we can't increase the default 255V voltage. The problem was solved quickly and the customer was happy thanks to this proactive FSP approach.

I also frequently receive calls from installers on site who are setting up monitoring via the wizard. I can always provide a walkthrough over the phone to ensure monitoring is setup and working before leaving the site.



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**/ You have been in contact with Fronius Service Support? How has that been?**

I speak with Fronius service support several times per week (maybe too frequently). Whether it's Sam, Bella or Chris the quality of the support is always the same: brilliant, and I always hang up the phone with a solution and new learnings. It is evident that they know each product inside out and are passionate about the technical side.

**/ What are some of the most important things for customers to consider when going solar?**

Essentially it comes down to price. However, the client needs to look past that when they are researching a solar solution. I recommend strongly considering product quality, reputable installation companies, solid warranties, correct system sizing, orientation, shading, performance estimations and consumption monitoring, as well as future considerations for storage.

This all needs to be carefully analysed as the system is going to be operating for many years. It's even more important now with the rapid influx of residential storage.

In my experience the cheapest system usually ends up being the most expensive.

**/ What are some of the challenges working in solar?**

Seeing reputable companies and one-man-operations who are offering quality components having to compete with low-end quotes offering sub-standard gear and preying on customer's ignorance. The 'solar coaster' has presented many challenges for me over the years, including the rapid shift from premium net and gross feed-in tariffs to self-consumption solutions and the 'great inverter shortage' we went through a few years back.

One of the main challenges I encounter is customer ignorance – many customers simply don't know what's on their roof or how it even works. At fault here are the installation companies not taking the time to show end users how the system works and how it will benefit them.

**/ How are you contributing to 24 hours of sun?**

Through my day-to-day operations I am constantly contributing to 24 hours of sun by making recommendations to better harness clean energy for our customers. Recommending an efficient energy solution that not only generates but also stores clean power for our customers is a genuine passion of mine – I am aiming for every household to be its own microclimate of 24hrs sun. Meanwhile at home I'm using the Fronius Smart Meter data help turn my household into a 24/7 solar-powered triumph.

**/ Tell us more about how you are using solar in your home.**

Well, I started out with 3.64kW of PV on a Fronius Primo 5.0-1 (AUS), west facing. After monitoring consumption with a Fronius Smart Meter for about six months I decided to upgrade the panel capacity to 6.64kW to best meet load requirements throughout the year. Having solar and access to consumption monitoring has really opened our eyes to seeing just how and when electricity is consumed within our home. For example, we are really maximising on our self-consumption thanks to a few simple adjustments in our energy consumption behaviours: we have shifted the washing machine and dishwasher to a timer to run in the afternoon, upgraded to LED downlights, and in summer we now run the air conditioning during the afternoon to cool the house for the evening.

It's always a learning curve, but if anything, having solar has boosted my energy awareness which really helps me do my job. I've also added a sensor card plus all four sensors so it will be interesting to view that data and apply it at a residential level.