

A portrait of an elderly man with short, light-colored hair, wearing a blue button-down shirt. He is resting his chin on his clasped hands, which are resting on a light-colored surface. He is smiling slightly. The background is a dark, solid color.

John Punch:

**A conversation with one
of MR's founding fathers**

By Mandy Clarke, Editor

John Punch is an impressive man. Besides being a much-loved husband, father of two and grandfather, he is also a highly respected Gold Coast solicitor many would consider one of the Management Rights industry's founding fathers.

John has dedicated much of his life to Gold Coast tourism and is a well-known figure to many of us here in Queensland.

In person, John is friendly, quietly spoken and, in his own words, very talkative. He still lives on the Gold Coast acreage he purchased with his wife, Renee, back in the 70s and works in the same Surfers Paradise office he and his partners built more than 30 years ago now. His daily routine boasts an enviable combination of predictability and bustle.

"I tried to enjoy working from home during this pandemic," he admits, "but I prefer to go to work at the main office. When I am home, I like to be able to relax and enjoy spending weekends in our garden maintaining the wonderful oasis we have created for our family."

John and Renee love to travel. In the early days of their marriage, they took a three-month sabbatical and travelled around Europe. The trip cemented a deep appreciation for tourism and they have since been to Asia, USA and UK but Italy retains the top spot in as their special place. John says: "There is nothing like travel to open your mind, we have gained so much from our experiences in different countries and cultures."

They have two grown children: daughter, Simone who is an audiologist based in Sydney and son, Daniel who works as a property developer in Melbourne. Six-year-old granddaughter Amalia brings them more joy and life lessons as they eagerly await the arrival of another grand-baby.

In his downtime, John is a reader of crime fiction and thrillers: his favourite authors are Australian crime writer Chris Hammer and the legendary British thriller



writer, John le Carré. A big fan of a good British crime drama, John also enjoys classical music but admits he has a penchant for "a bit of rock" Rod Stewart and Sting thrown into the mix. Which style of music makes its way into the office? Surely, a grand mix of both.

John tells me about his adventurous British ex-pat parents. They were builders who moved around Australia with him and his seven siblings! With them, he shares a deep admiration for his mother. He says she taught him to "always be optimistic and to be as helpful to everyone as he can be". This is something he tries to live by and instil in his family.

Born in a picture perfect quaint English village, John was raised in Melbourne and moved to the Gold Coast in 1961. This was an exciting era in which to arrive in the raw South Coast town that was only recently named Gold Coast City, after a post-war period of rapid growth in both population and tourist activity. The fast-developing resorts in those early days offered real estate, tourism and

entrepreneurial opportunities that John and his peers, were eager to seize up. This early rush to build something special in the then-burgeoning Gold Coast City, built Management Rights as we know it today.

Proud of his input to the development of such a unique, powerful industry John humbly describes the creation of Managements Rights as "born out of necessity". He was there at the beginning and remembers when the Gold Coast was going through its "high rise phase", when developers and apartment owners recognised the need for some sort of regulated management of short-term lettings.

Around this time, the pioneering and passionate, lieutenant-colonel David Allen arrived in Surfers Paradise and a radical new concept - Management Rights - was conceived. Dave Allen Real Estate at Chevron Island became a specialist agency for Management Rights and his passion for the industry saw him serve on the REIQ at local and state level. He sadly died in 2013

but his legacy is woven into the fabric of this vital sector.

Working alongside David Allen and others, John had a strong hand in developing the Management Rights legislation. He says: "It took six years of hard work and many meetings with the state and federal governments to finally get the 97-legislation sorted. But, the work didn't stop there.

"Our Management Rights legislation has constantly been under attack from those who seek to destroy it and we continue the fight to ensure it remains strong for owners and managers and the needs of financiers are also protected."

From its inception, the Management Rights industry has weathered many storms. However, it is because of the strong legal foundation upon which it is built that it is able to come back stronger time and time again. This is an industry that supports 'mum and dad' operations up and down the state and has a unique Aussie history worth protecting.

John studied law at University of Queensland and has practiced as a solicitor since 1969. Most of you will know him as a founding partner of Gold Coast law firm, Short Punch and Greatorix. As a founding director of Gold Coast Tourism Ltd, now operating as Destination Gold Coast, John served as a member of its board since its formation in 1975 and is currently the honorary secretary. In 1997 he was honoured to be awarded the OAM (Order of Australia Medal) for contributions to tourism, commerce, and charity.

Like a proud father, John describes this resilient industry: "Management Rights has weathered many legal attacks and a few recessions, but it has always bounced back, and I am confident it will also weather Covid-19. The signs of recovery are now apparent. Those of us who are passionate about this industry have always worked as a team, alongside ARAMA we always share the load and support each other."

"One thing is for sure," he jests: "This industry always keeps us on our toes!" ■