



John Ward

1945 - 2024



a centenary of friendships



**Charter to Antarctica on
4 December 1978
(VH-EBG City of Hobart).**

**Adrian Lutton presents John Ward (Director of Adelaide Airport) with the
Commemorative Photo of the First 747 into Adelaide Airport**



Red Tail SA Members at the Presentation of the commemorative photo of the first 747 into Adelaide Airport

Left to Right

- Mark Seymour- Walsh
- Mireille Novak
- Adrian Lutton
- John Ward
- Bronte Sterk
- Des Novak



Standing – Left to Right

John Ward – Red Tail Patron SA

Norm Leek – Red Tail Member

Max Hill – Red Tail Co-founder

Jim Eames – Red Tail Co-founder

Brian Wild – Red Tail Co-founder

Rafael Toda – Red Tail Co-founder

Seated – Left to Right

Charles Wade – Red Tail Patron ACT

John Fysh – Red Tail World-Wide Patron

Red Tail Gathering at the Central Cost of NSW with John Fysh

Qantas boss changed the face of air travel by introducing cheap fares

By Jim Eames August 26, 2024

JOHN WARD: 1945 - 2024

It's probably unsurprising that in addition to a flow of tributes from Australia and around the world, the sudden passing of former Qantas chief executive John Ward has rekindled memories of an airline which has earned a unique place in Australian history.

Among many thousands of former staff, Ward represented the final years of an era where the then public ownership of Australia's international carrier provided millions of Australians with a sense of pride, not merely in its original pioneering achievements but perhaps even more importantly for a reputation for safety which had earned an enviable place in the world's aviation industry.

That being said, it is probably unfair to compare the Qantas of today to the one Ward led as it moved inexorably towards its privatisation and onwards into a markedly different and far more competitive world.

In his own case, Ward would also mark his own path in the business world, one on which he would progress from a relatively minor position as an advanced planning analyst in January 1969 to eventually become its chief executive.

Joining the company with a BSc Degree in computer science and applied mathematics, his initial focus was to lead a small team responsible for the design and implementation of the pricing innovations which would come with the introduction of the giant Boeing 747 in 1971.

It would be through such pricing initiatives that would see the introduction of low-cost fares and would herald an era of mass travel which not only allowed thousands of Australians to fly between Australia and Asia and the UK and Europe, but also assist in the development of tourism as a significant Australian industry.



John Ward in 1993. *CREDIT: FAIRFAX*

After a brief secondment as marketing manager to Malaysian Airlines in 1972, to be followed by postings to Germany and then to Singapore as the airline's regional director for Asia in 1981, he began the path which would equip him well for his eventual role as the airline's leader.

His appointment as the airline's general manager, marketing in 1982 showed it was already obvious he was part of a small group of executives which might be eventually groomed as possible successors by the airline's then-general manager, Keith Hamilton.

All that changed when the airline was shocked by Hamilton's premature death in December 1984.

John Ward, making the Qantas business more streamlined in 1984.

Ward would serve as deputy under two managing directors, first Ron Yates, then the one-time Australian ambassador to Japan, John Menadue.

With Menadue's departure in 1989, Ward took the reins as managing director and CEO of a company which was about to experience unprecedented changes in the years ahead.

Primarily prompted by government decisions in relation not only to his own airline but across the whole of Australia's airline industry, Ward and Qantas chairman Bill Dix found themselves involved in manoeuvres to establish the company's immediate future.

The high point came in 1992 when then Prime Minister Paul Keating announced the government had approved the sale of Australian Airlines to Qantas as part of a financial restructuring which included the sale of 25 per cent of Qantas to British Airways.



John Ward, making the Qantas business more streamlined in 1984. *CREDIT: FAIRFAX*

In financial terms Qantas parted with \$400 million for Australian Airlines, while British Airways added more than \$600 million to the government's own coffers. Thus the die would be cast for not only a change to the aviation landscape but the eventual privatisation of Qantas itself.

For Ward, however, the changes were far from over, and he now faced the most formidable challenge of his career: the critical task to somehow convince Australian Airline's intensely proud and dedicated workforce that they were now to be the domestic arm of Qantas.

Ward set out on an extensive nationwide tour to encourage Australian Airlines staff to accept the changed circumstances, even though many staff were largely hostile. It would take years for the staff of the two merged entities to come together as a unit.

He followed the merger task with a deep involvement in preparations for the sale of Qantas itself until his own resignation in 1993.

On leaving Qantas he joined News Corporation, playing a key role in News' entry into subscription television and the company's divestment of Ansett Airlines.

Despite occupying other board roles during his retirement he was never far from the aviation industry, as a director of Brisbane and Adelaide airports along with other positions in tourism, aviation, freight and economic regulation.

He is survived by his wife Edna and their son Matthew.



Qantas captain Ian Lucas (left) with Qantas chief executive John Ward and the chief executive of the Sydney 2000 Olympic bid, Rod McGeoch. *CREDIT: PETER RAE/FAIRFAX MEDIA*

Fitting tributes to a great leader

Hi All

Very sad news. Been advised John (Tubby) Ward passed away in hospital today. Many of the former colleagues in this distribution worked with John, particularly when he was Chief Executive of Qantas Airways. He will be sadly missed..... **David Thompson**

What a shock!

I had seen John last year and have heard from him a couple of times. I didn't know he was unwell. We joined QF a couple of months apart and he worked with me when I was working with Keith Hamilton (plus later in our careers too). He had a great career in the years before we joined together with Australian. Sad news indeed..... **Carmel Scharpe**

Oh that's sad news. I was only thinking about him last night - how spooky is that. I was his Executive Secretary for a few years when he was Deputy CE. Very fond memories.....**Jane Ferguson**

Agreed. Very sad news. Last of the long term career employee that became our CEO **David Fleming**

Very sad indeed David. Thanks for your advice..... **David Hagley.**

Truly a great guy and gentleman. RIP Tubby..... **David Smith**

Tubby really went into bat for me in PNG when I was under a deportation cloud over the return of two illegal immigrants from BNE back to PNG from whence they came. This saw me lose my a/pmgr young Mr Kevin Bartlett, my finance manager who had her work permit cancelled (a 22 year expat in PNG), and 24 hours later the new QF a/p manager sent packing. This also coincided with a relief Australian High Commissioner who didn't want to get involved. It took Tubby contacting Gareth Evans (foreign Affairs minister) to intervene much to my and QF's relief. My condolences to the family...
Guy Huntley

Hi Everyone,
Guy's memories of how Tubby helped him stay in PNG also revoked my recollections of (I assume), the same period when Rina Karabesinis asked me to go to PNG and help Guy find a new Accountant, which we did. However, it seemed to be the most dangerous place that I had ever been to as Guy would refuse to allow me to walk the 200 yds from the QF office to the hotel.
Sadly, Tubby also oversaw the dying days of the 'Golden Years of Qantas' i.e. 1960 -1990's but he has left us with many happy memories of both himself as a person and the Qantas 'family' to which we all belong. R.I.P ..
Tony Songest

JOHN WARD
MANAGING DIRECTOR
QANTAS

9 August 1993

John,

During your last week in Qantas I am sure you are reflecting on the 25 years you gave to the airline which has been such a large part of your life and the lives of so many of your colleagues.

I remember well the early days in Qantas when you joined the Advance Planning unit. Names such as Peter Mc Namara, Tommy Russo, Liz Baxter, Frank Olivier, Rod Davies and Jim Bradfield were very much part of those years.

I remember with fondness my friendship with Edna and yourself in London and the times you visited Fiji with Edna and Mathew in the mid 80's.

I have always known, John, that I could count on your support when it really mattered. You may not remember, but I always will, the help you gave me and my family during the 1985 cyclone in Fiji and the military coup some years later.

Like many others, it was obvious to me even from your earliest days in Qantas that you would one day lead this airline.

I knew that in the many senior positions you have held we could always rely on you to make the hard decisions - decisions which you have always taken despite the personal cost.

Your contribution to Qantas, I believe, has been greatest during the last few years when, through your leadership, you have prepared this company for its greatest period of change in 70 years.

I am one of the many who wish to thank you, John, for giving so much of yourself to Qantas, for ensuring its future and for the friendship and support you have so readily offered ~~me~~ over the years.

With very best regards,

Garry Saunders

It was a privilege to attend John Ward's Celebration of Life event on 22 September along with many others who were privileged to know John and to work with him during his time at Qantas. Although it is more than thirty years since we had this opportunity, the friendships formed all those years ago are still strong. John, of course, was an outstanding leader who supported his team at every opportunity. The work he did in making sure Qantas had a domestic fleet and laying the foundations for privatisation set the company up for another generation. Not to mention his purchase of eighteen B747-400s which ensured Qantas had a very young fleet of aircraft and a top quality on-board product for many years to come. He is sadly missed.

Garry Saunders

Following John Ward's Celebration of Life on Friday, 20 September 2024, I came across a letter I wrote to John in August 1993 in the last week of his time with Qantas. This letter says what I felt about John at the time and shows the support he gave to me and everyone in Qantas who had the privilege to know him..... **Garry Saunders**

A special human being who could combine his intelligence with empathy . A quality that endeared him to all and equipped him to be a very effective leader who actually listened. **Bill Wright (JCT and who sat on industry and government boards with John)**

What a loss and so sad to say good by to such a lovely person. I was involved with John's appointment into QF back in '69 and took a keen interest in his progress. It did not surprise me one bit to see him at the top in '89.

He was always available to discuss staffing issues and took a keen interest into what was happening with posted staff and their families..

My farewell from the company took place mid '90 and along with Allan Braund, Charles Spiteri, and I were farewelled at a function on the 9th floor given by (Tubby) and he spoke highly of our contribution to the company and our response praised him for the changes he has made for the betterment of the company. His loss was too soon but he will be remembered by many, and my thoughts go out to his family at this time, RIP JOHN..... **Neil McLEAN**

It was my privilege and pleasure to have known and worked with John Ward, fondly known as Tubby, by many of his close friends.

I first met John in 1971 when I joined the Advance Planning Department in Underwood House.

Initially I was a JCT "visitor" but was invited to join the team there. John was the senior analyst and Peter Stainlay was there too. John and Peter were flatting in Neutral Bay and I subsequently moved in with Peter when John moved overseas to Kuala Lumpur. I met lots of great people working for Qantas at that time. Nearly all of us were in our 20's and 30's so we also had lots of fun, particularly at parties in Neural Bay. John's paella was "infamous"!

John was quickly identified by Keith Hamilton, Director Airline Operations, as someone with great potential. It was an exciting time in the aviation industry as Qantas took delivery of the first of many Boeing 747 aircraft, and a task force led by John introduced unprecedented low fares to London and Europe in 1972. Over the next 20 years John rose rapidly in the organisation, becoming Chief Operating Officer and finally CEO. None of those who knew John over that time were surprised. His knowledge across the commercial, financial and information technology areas was broadened across the operational areas of Qantas and he was widely liked and respected for his capacity to understand the complexities of airline operations and always contribute positively to resolving issues and taking opportunities.

John was held in very high regard for his management and leadership during his time at Qantas. His experience, knowledge and his wisdom have since been recognised in other organisations that have followed his career at Qantas.

On a personal level I will always think of John as a caring and generous person. He would always be ready to assist in any way that he could. He willingly gave advice and encouragement, and created opportunities for others and I will always be thankful to him for guiding my career at Qantas and for his friendship.

With very fond memories. RIP John.

Ian Gay

To Matt Ward

Your Dad was one of the most decent, intelligent and approachable people I worked with/for in my 40 odd years in aviation, 30 of those at Qantas.

Even as CEO of Qantas he took the time to recognise those who put in additional effort. I still have a note from him when I was at Sydney airport after we settled a problem where he praised the staff. They loved it. After he left Qantas he was always willing to meet and chat.

Shortly after Jenny's stroke back in February he sent me a note saying Edna and he were thinking of her. A truly thoughtful and good man.

We send our heartfelt condolences to you and your Mum.

Ron Rosalky

He certainly had an astounding career. He'll be sadly missed by his family and friends. **Hugh Morgan**

Sad news indeed. John (Tubby) Ward has only been a member of our 'Manly Boys' group for about a year or so. I will pass on this info to the guys even though I note some will be already aware from being on your list. Regards, **Ted Beecher**

Excerpts from a Speech by Les Fisk at the Celebration of the Life of John Ward

Christmas Eve 1989 unbeknown to John we were trying to get the Minister's signature on John's appointment as Chief Executive. We finally tracked the Minister down at a Canberra Christmas party and John went home as Chief Executive.

He then went on a ski holiday. A week later he had his leg up on a chair and an array of pain killers on his desk. He needed a knee reconstruction.

Two years later I asked John what he was doing over the Christmas/New Year. He said because of the disaster last time he was heading out on another ski trip. Sure enough the pain killers were back on his desk. This time he dislocated his shoulder.... I said "John you need to take up a different sport".

It is interesting to compare Keith Hamilton and John's tenures as Chief Executives.

- In length of service Keith's tenure was 8 years 4 months. John's 3 years 7 months.
- Keith started with \$564m revenue and finished up with \$1.3b. John started with \$3.1b and finished with \$5.1b.
- Keith at the end of his time had 11,500 employees. John had over 26,000.
- Keith started with 19 aircraft (7 of which were 707's) and finished up with 21. John began with 42 and finished up with 128.
- The final passenger numbers for Keith were 2.1 million, John had 13 million passengers.
- The most telling statistic of all was Keith attended 106 Board and Sub-Committee meetings over the 8 years. John was subjected to 102 such meetings (just 4 less than Keith's) but in just over 3 years.

On time performance was in the 90%. We had the second youngest fleet age. Singapore Airlines just pipped us. Customer satisfaction was high.

John's final salary was \$360,000 a year. A tad different from today's remuneration. People did not comprehend that we were proud and privileged to work for the most respected and loved Australian company. We ran to work.

If all the Chief Executives from Sir Hudson Fysh to John were asked what they would most like to achieve in their term of office they would all say two things.

- Qantas to achieve a domestic network and
- To be properly capitalised

John achieved both

Little did we know that the acquisition of Australian Airlines would result ultimately in a virtual reverse takeover. John was the first to go and within 18 months all his direct reports suffered a similar fate. Dark times fell on Qantas and many careers were extinguished and there was much angst and despair. Despite this the acquisition of a domestic network was the right decision. It provided a guaranteed floor under a major and growing portion of the Company's ongoing profitability.

It rates as the most important decision in the Qantas story and John achieved it...History will shine well on him.

Many would know that I was way to junior to have had any meaningful encounters with John during his time at Qantas. Nevertheless, our paths crossed once or twice and even in those brief moments, he managed to leave a lasting impression.

It was after our time in the Airline that I had the fortune to get to know and engaged more with John. It all started in 2015 when we formed Red Tail Road to 100, aimed at acknowledging former Qantas staff, and all their contributions that earned the Airline its iconic status... A fitting tribute to all, in the lead-up to the Qantas Centenary in 2020.

The Foundation Committee of Brian Wild, Jim Eames, Max Hill and myself could not think of a more appropriate Qantas leader than Tubby to become our first Patron.. and this was the start of my relationship with John.

His guidance and stewardship in the years leading up to the Centenary were invaluable. John always made himself available over a cup of coffee, or by emails.

Our relationship grew beyond Red Tail, and John continued to assist me in my current role as President of the Australia Philippines Business Council, facilitating introductions, organising meetings and site visits at Brisbane and Adelaide airports.

John was never more than a day away from a response to a request or a favour, and it was always done with pleasure, and humility.

A true leader in every respect, humble, down to earth, and he always managed to make you feel like you were speaking to "one of the boys".

God speed John F Ward! You will remain remembered fondly by all who knew you.

Raffy Toda

Devastating news David!!!! So very very sad.

Tubby was an absolute giant in our industry and his loss cannot be overstated.

I can't begin to express how sad I feel – I got to know John pretty well when he was Manager Germany and I was APM LHR in the 1970s and John came to London regularly as he was in a relationship with a delightful lady called Edna James (I think that was her maiden name), Exec Secretary/Asst to Mgr UK & Ireland, who he ultimately married and brought to Australia.

When I left London in 1978 to migrate to OZ I reported directly to Tubby as Inflight Standards Manager, a newly created position the main role of which was to be a conduit between Keith Hamilton and his management team, of which Tubby was an integral part, and the Chairman Sir Lenox Hewitt.

I'd had a lot of 'experiences' with Sir Lenox during his many trips to London to see his daughter in the UK and another in Brussels and most times after returning to Sydney he would have a string of complaints about the trip and would only deal with KH to fix things. Of course, KH had one or two far more important things to deal with, like running the company!

Tubby told me Sir L had made a slightly complimentary comment about me to him after one visit to LHR, so he and KH decided I was to be that conduit.

Tubby told me privately the position was a 'no-win' one, as sooner or later I would fall foul of Sir Lenox, and he promised me when that happened, he would immediately get me out of the firing line – he kept that promise nearly a year later.

That was the sort of honorable person Tubby was and it's unlikely we will see his like again, certainly not in today's Qantas anyway. All the best my friend

Raka Davies

I think you can sum up John Tubby very succinctly, there was no "hoo ha" or fanfare about him, what you saw was what you got, a very genuine guy. My dealings with him at Qantas were always polite and to the point, ..no beating around the subject, and always a fair and agreeable outcome.

During the early days of Red Tail, Rafael Toda and I met with John to explain fully the Red Tail concept and aim, and asked John would he be willing to accept the position of South Australian Patron (bearing in mind John was a Director of the Adelaide Airport Authority) after a few questions and without hesitation he agreed...An excellent CEO of Qantas, let go far too early, as a result of the QF/TN merger.

I wish you fair winds and clear skies for your onward journey. RIP, Tubby.

Max Hill.

A few words about John and Engineering.

Margot and I are sad with the whole old Qantas community with the loss of John. He was a great supporter of the Engineering group. He gave me great support when big decisions were needed in the Engineering division. While younger than me, he acted as a mentor when I had to deal with the Qantas Board and undertake big decisions.

He had a fine mind and quickly understood the complexities that arose in the difficult times of the late 1990s when large operational expansion, structural problems with the B747, and lack of engineering staff impacted on the division. I will always remember John as a friend and a great work colleague.

Mick Ryan

Thank you for this sad news about John Ward. I only knew him during the very difficult period he was experiencing as the Qantas CEO. I was GM M&S P&O Princess APAC Region, and he needed guidance as to way we marketed the P&O Global resort operation and the \$ value of P&O Princess flight connections to those and our global cruise departure points to & from Australia. May he rest in peace. **Bruce Gregory**

THE WEEK THAT WAS

By JO-ANNE HUI-MILLER, Associate Publisher

..... in sad news, an Aussie airline legend has recently died - John Ward, who oversaw Qantas' landmark acquisition of Australian Airlines in 1992.

John was at Qantas for 25 years, as both MD and CEO between 1989 and 1993. He had many achievements during his career, including shifting the carrier's strategic focus from being an exclusive international airline, to laying the foundations for the company's privatisation in 1993. He also helped to develop and introduce business class to the world.

Former high-profile Qantas operations executive Roger Lindeman gave us a call and shared his fond memories of John with us.

"Having worked at Qantas myself for 43 years, I have many memories of John, he was a thoroughly decent, respected human being and I, along with many other Qantas 'oldies' are saddened by his passing," he said.

Plenty of John's friends and former colleagues have shared on the Travel Daily LinkedIn page how much they respected his leadership and enjoyed working with him. Of course, many have noted the great work he achieved during his career, but more have left beautiful messages speaking of his emotional intelligence, generosity, kind heart and empathy.

Like John, let's all hope that the legacy we each leave behind is wrapped up in the positive impact that we had on the people around us and how we made them feel.

Travel Daily

By Roger Lindeman:

John Ward was CEO of QANTAS from 1989 to 1992. He led the merger of QF and Australian Airlines and was then replaced by James Strong in 1993.

Having worked at QANTAS myself for 43 years, I have many memories of John Ward.

His reputation in Singapore is legendary. After the Governments of Singapore and Malaysia agreed to "split" MSA (Malaysia- Singapore Airlines) in 1972, with then QANTAS CEO Keith Hamilton, John was heavily involved in the strategy and direction of the MSA "break-up" which resulted in that part of the world developing two quality carriers, namely Singapore Airlines and Malaysian Airlines.

QANTAS is widely recognised in Singapore and Malaysia for the part it played in the transition and John Ward was a key player in this significant de-merger along with then CEO Keith Hamilton, Julian Hercus and Peter Stainlay.

I vividly recall being in Singapore in the early 70's and John Ward arrived at Changi on a QF flight to an SQ welcoming party where SQ executive Michael Tan hugged John long before hugging became fashionable!!

John was also recognised for his part in the introduction of Business Class to the world. It was QANTAS that conceptualised a class of travel that would be pitched between First and Economy classes. This world leading innovation was developed and introduced under the guidance of John "Tubby" Ward as CEO. The success of Business Class is there for all to see.

Post John's QANTAS career, I had several dealings with him at News and at Adelaide and Brisbane Airports and like his time with the airline, he was always a thoroughly decent, respected human being and I, along with many other QANTAS "oldies" are saddened by his passing.



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Adelaide Airport is so proud to have been part of John Ward's life.

John was a director of Adelaide and Parafield Airports for 22 years before he passed away last month. He brought deep aviation experience having been the Managing Director of Qantas from 1989 to 1993 and working for our national carrier for 25 years.

John's calm, solid wisdom demonstrated through intellect, commerciality and heart was unique. He helped steer our business through a new terminal build, our recent terminal expansion and through more challenging times such as the COVID pandemic. He was an ardent supporter of our people and embodied and drove our company's values.

It was an honour and privilege to have known John and his legacy will live on throughout our business. We think about him all the time.



Phillip Adams

@PhillipAdams_1

...

Vale John. Shocked to learn of the death of John Ward affectionately known as Tubby. John was CEO of Qantas back in its glory days – at the time I suggested ‘the Spirit of Australia’ as the airline’s slogan. (Words it then deserved) Tubby was a lovely bloke –

27th Aug 2024, 07:34

[Dick Smith](#)

Join Date: May 2002
Location: Australia

Good bloke. It was John who took the risk and brought Qantas in as my major sponsor for my solo helicopter flight.



Richard de Crespigny AM • 2nd

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1mo • Edited •

I am so very sad to hear of the death of my friend John Ward.

John worked with Qantas for 25 years, serving as MD and CEO from 1989-1993.

He was great company at the Rort Air luncheon (for retired Qantas friends) at St Albans, NSW just six weeks ago.

Farewell and thank you John. You were a fabulous caretaker for the Qantas brand during one of its most challenging times. You were an outstanding Australian. You are very sorely missed.



Stephen Vineburg

Infrastructure Investment

He was a wonderful man. A true friend to me and so many others.