

# John Hughes recruits independent chairman



By [Mark Beyer](#)

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[Retail](#)



John Hughes (top), his daughter Joanna Millard and Craig Holland.

The family company that owns [John Hughes](#) Group has recruited Melbourne-based business adviser [Craig Holland](#) as chairman as it prepares for a wider leadership succession.

[Mr Holland](#) quietly joined the board of [Gilpin Park](#) Pty Ltd last year after being engaged 18 months ago to lead a review of the group's governance and structure.

His appointment came to light when [John Hughes](#)' daughter and heir apparent [Joanna Millard](#) sat down with *Business News* to share her story and ambitions for the group.

The 42-year-old [Ms Millard](#) had been executive chair at [Gilpin Park](#) but stepped aside as chair in favour of [Mr Holland](#) in August last year.

“We are building it out, in terms of the governance structures and the strategy of the family company,” [Ms Millard](#) said.

“We wanted to put in place a more robust governance structure and have an independent person sit on the board and provide their insights on working with other families as well.”

[Gilpin Park](#)’s core asset is the [John Hughes](#) Group automotive business, which has annual sales of \$900 million, and its expansive property holdings.

It also holds a number of other investments.

[Mr Holland](#) heads advisory firm Generation Private.

His most notable role was serving as a director of The Good Guys and chairing the board committee that led the sale of the family-owned business to JB Hi Fi for \$870 million in 2016.

[Mr Holland](#) told *Business News* his other board roles include a second family office in Perth but declined to provide details.

[Mr Holland](#)’s appointment comes after several other additions to the [Gilpin Park](#) board in recent years.

Former ANZ Bank state manager and Wallis Drilling chairman [Mark Crumby](#) joined the board as a non-executive director in 2022.

The board also includes the automotive group’s veteran chief operating officer [Rod Gailey](#) and long-time tax adviser [Dudley Elliott](#).

They are additional to the group’s 88-year-old founder, [John Hughes](#), his wife Margarita Hughes, and [Ms Millard](#).

Collectively, it has a large and very experienced board for a family holding company.

The governance structure at the operating business is much leaner and simpler.

[Mr Hughes](#) is founder and chairman while [Ms Millard](#) and [Mr Gailey](#) are executive directors.

[Mr Hughes](#) continues to work full-time in the business, despite his age and being treated for cancer over the past two years.

“He never talks about his health or let’s that be a focus,” [Ms Millard](#) said.

“He is charging along, he’s very motivational, John still works six-and-a-half days a week.”

That said, [Mr Hughes](#) does have a succession plan.

“He acknowledges reality, he won’t be around forever and we need to make plans for the future,” she said.

That plan includes [Ms Millard](#) becoming the group’s next managing director.

She said her role would be different from the way her father has led the business.

“I won’t be as hands-on and operational because I see broader opportunities within our family group,” she said.

The group is also planning to appoint a chief executive to handle the day-to-day operations of the automotive dealerships.

***\* For an in-depth profile of [Ms Millard](#), see the next edition of the *Business News* magazine, where the qualified lawyer talks about her business career, the property company she has established with her husband and her thoughts on an ASX listing.***