

**Media Release: 20 August 2010**

**Scholarship to honour 100 year old New Zealand natural health innovator**

Founder of Comvita, a natural health product company, Claude Stratford marked his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday earlier this week and as part of the celebrations a scholarship has been created in his honour.

The Claude Alexander Stratford Research Scholarship is sponsored by Comvita and established in association with The University of Auckland.

The ongoing scholarship will provide a three year stipend for a PhD student studying a topic related to natural health products, based at The University of Auckland.

Comvita Chief Technology Officer, Dr. Ralf Schlothauer said the scholarship was created to honour Claude's lifelong achievement in natural health.

"We're very proud to announce the establishment of this scholarship and to provide an opportunity for a student to contribute to the growing body of credible scientific research around natural health products."

The inaugural recipient of the Claude Alexander Stratford Research Scholarship is Swapna Gannabathula who will conduct her three year PhD on immune stimulation from honey.

Most recently working as a research assistant at the New Zealand Institute for Plant & Food Research, from January 2011 Swapna will be based at The University of Auckland's Institute for Innovation in Biotechnology (IIB) where Comvita is a co-locator.

Director of the IIB, Professor Joerg Kistler says the scholarship is a vital part of the Comvita and University of Auckland partnership. It demonstrates the commitment of Comvita to the development of innovative natural health products backed by credible scientific research.

The sponsorship of the scholarship will be further expanded by a generous contribution from Comvita's Chinese Distributors. Mr and Mrs Zhu, who are currently visiting New Zealand, and an anonymous donor.

Claude is a great example of someone who has lived well, for longer, says Dr. Schlothauer.

"Our aim is to contribute to research that might help people get to 100 and remain healthy in the process."

Claude's special 100<sup>th</sup> birthday party will be hosted today at the Comvita Visitor Centre in Paengaroa.

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## **Notes**

### **About Claude Stratford**

Claude Stratford is an outstanding New Zealander who has led natural health innovation at the helm of a business that today turns over \$85 million a year and exports to 14 countries around the world. He founded Comvita in 1974, at the age of 64, by making and selling a range of bee products from the basement in his home in Paengaroa (Bay of Plenty). At the age of 95 Claude was a finalist in the national Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Awards

Claude owned his first beehive in 1921 at age 11 and his life-long affinity with bee products has contributed to numerous innovations in natural health science. Claude has spent his life bringing the health benefits offered by Nature to people in New Zealand and around the world. Awarded the Queen's Service Medal in 1999 for his service to the community, Claude continues to support philanthropic projects in New Zealand and overseas, through his charitable trust.

### **About Comvita Ltd. [www.comvita.com](http://www.comvita.com)**

Comvita enjoys a reputation as a premium global natural health brand and is committed to the development of innovative natural health and wellbeing products backed by credible scientific research. With a proud 36-year heritage in therapeutic bee-based products, Comvita is the world's largest manufacturer and marketer of Manuka (*Leptospermum*) honey, however in more recent times the Company has developed its range of ingredient platforms, unique IP and products that meet global consumer preferences in natural health. Comvita offers products in the categories of Healthcare, Personal Care (Skincare and Woundcare) and Functional Foods. The Company sells its products in over 14 countries with offices in New Zealand, Hong Kong, Australia, Japan, Taiwan and the UK.

### **About the Institute for Innovation in Biotechnology [www.biotech.co.nz](http://www.biotech.co.nz)**

The Institute for Innovation in Biotechnology offers start-up and mature companies tailored space in a high-tech environment in which to achieve company goals faster and better. The Institute offers flexible, cost-effective lease terms in dedicated biotech lab space where IP can be fully protected.