Lois McKay passed away at the age of 62 years on the 10th of November 2015 after a short illness.

This very sad and sudden loss will be felt now and for many years to come by the New Zealand plant protection community. For over 25 years Lois had a very close association with AgResearch plant protection, as well as being a highly competent Secretary to the New Zealand Plant Protection Society between 2000 and 2004. Through such contribution Lois became truly expert in who was doing what in plant protection and where they worked. This included people on other campuses working for various organisations. She was astonishingly effective at this and seemed to have a photographic memory for everybody’s telephone numbers and in some cases (where necessary) even passwords.

Lois was an ideal and astute contributor to meetings taking accurate and pertinent notes that she promptly circulated. But above all Lois was cheerful, good natured and prescient. Through such characteristics Lois was well able to deflect all sorts of crises away from her researcher colleagues, while at the same time doing a great deal to develop a sense of community amongst plant protection researchers. Indeed, while not formally trained in plant protection, she rapidly became an outstanding proof-reader and more lately an effective scientific editor. Lois had a great eye for detail and was well able to discern poorly developed arguments and obfuscation. Through such a combination of skills and attributes as well as her sheer commitment to the people she worked with, Lois contributed greatly to the general advancement of New Zealand plant protection research.

Possibly Lois’ affinity for the people in plant protection and the work they were doing was understandable given that she was brought up in Lincoln Village surrounded by people who worked at what was then known as Lincoln College. Her father Tom Taylor ran the small seeds farm and upon leaving school, one of the jobs Lois had was to work at the Lincoln College Post Office where she met many neophyte plant protection researchers. The untimely passing of Lois McKay has left many in the plant protection community and well beyond, with an abiding deep sense of loss.

Stephen Goldson