



## Pet owners have better pals: study

A NEW university study has found pet owners are more likely to make meaningful friendships.

The University of Western Australia study, released last week, showed pet ownership could help people who were shy or introverted become part of their community. The study involved a phone survey of more than 2500 randomly selected people across Australia and the US.

It found dog owners were five times more likely to get to know people in their neighbourhood compared with other pet owners.

Associate Professor Lisa Wood, who co-wrote the study, said strong support networks were good for mental and physical health, so the study looked at how pets could contribute to those factors.

“We found that around 40 per cent of pet owners reported receiving one or more types of social support from someone they met through their pet,” Prof Wood said.

“This ranged from someone they could talk to about problems or things that were worrying them, through to being able to ask someone for advice or practical help.

“With loneliness and social isolation a major problem in Australia, pet ownership may be one way to help those who feel alone.

“Pets create opportunities for interpersonal interactions that can lead to deep, human friendships.”