



University of Tennessee

## Veterinary Social Work

Veterinary Social Work (VSW) is a new field of practice that attends to the human side of the human - animal bond.

Veterinary Social Workers understand the unique bond between us and our companion animals, and can provide a safe space to share the challenges as well as joy of this special bond.

## What can VSW offer?

Social workers can provide assistance to improve the wellbeing of Vet's, their staff and clients using knowledge, theory and skills regarding human behaviour, social structures, systems and processes, and comply with the AASW Code of Ethics (2010).

### Vet / staff support

- Compassion fatigue management
- Self care strategies
- Debriefing / counselling
- Education around grief, conflict and emotionally supporting clients
- Communication skills / conflict resolution

### Support for clients

- In clinic support clients with treatment or end-of-life decision making in a non-judgemental environment
- Bereavement support for clients
- Grief and loss support group
- Individual counselling
- Education—resources to take home or access online

### Education

- Link between human and animal violence
- Collaboration with other services (Child Protection, referral to mental health services, financial counsellors, community supports, etc.)

## Specific services for clients

### Bereavement Packs

- Pet loss brochure
- Memorialisation services
- Cremation services

### Grief / Loss Groups

- Support group
- Normalises grief
- Strategies – new ways of coping

### Euthanasia resources / education

- Quality of Life scales
- End of Life Values and Goals worksheet

### Continuing support

- Follow-up phone calls
- Individual / family counselling



## 4 Areas of VSW

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- Compassion Fatigue Management
- Animal related grief and bereavement
- The link between human and animal violence
- Animal-assisted interventions



## Further support

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For more information on sourcing support for your staff and/or clients:

- Tel:** Call Wendy on **0459 552 566**
- Email:** [wendytill7@gmail.com](mailto:wendytill7@gmail.com)
- Website:** <https://vetsocialwork.weebly.com/>
- Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/wendy.vetcare](http://www.facebook.com/wendy.vetcare)

## About Wendy

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With an ambition from a little girl to help animals, I began life training to be a Vet at Murdoch University in Perth, WA.

I left this degree unfinished, deciding I could not reconcile the ethical dilemmas involved in practice.

I later trained as a Social Worker and discovered the Certificate of Veterinary Social Work through the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

I have an awareness of the level of mental health distress within the profession, as well as a passion for supporting Vet's and their clients with the unique challenges associated with the care of companion animals.

While finishing my VSW Certificate service learning, I am available on Fridays for counselling, consultation or client support in a voluntary capacity.

Wendy Till

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Veterinary Social Worker

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*What is it?*