



Touch their soul and spirit

LOUISE GOODWIN

NURSING staff at Minchinbury Manor did not know what to do when Gwen Grugan cried out.

Ms Grugan, 88, is in the advanced stages of dementia at the Rooty Hill aged care facility.

But since she was placed in the Namaste Care program, her anxiety has disappeared.

The program's American founder, Professor Joyce Simard, visited the facility last week to brief staff and patients' families about it.

Minchinbury Manor is one of three aged care facilities in NSW trialling Namaste Care, which focuses on individual care, dignity and respect for advanced dementia patients.

Director of Research at the School of Nursery and Midwifery, University of Western Sydney, Professor Esther Chang, secured a federal grant to run the trials and report on the results.

"The project is very exciting and what we

want to see is that people have the opportunity to see that it works and that they would want to adopt it as well," Prof Chang said.

The Namaste Care program blends nursing care with activities, beginning each day with a welcome to the care room, which is filled with the sound of classical music and the smell of scented oils. Each patient was treated to food or activities they enjoyed before the onset of the dementia. A core component of the program is loving touch from staff.

Professor Simard started the program seven years ago after realising there were residents who no longer responded to organised activities. "Quality of life means more than just keeping people clean, dry and fed – there needs to be a way you can touch their soul and spirit, and even get a giggle," Prof Simard said.



Professor Joyce Simard meets with Gwen Grugan, 88, in an atmosphere of love and mutual respect. Picture: DAVID MARSHALL