

19th November, 2023

To whom it may concern,

I am delighted to be able to contribute to the proposed “Ampullary Electroreceptors” / “Platypus River Journey” Project by Paul Fletcher for the Now-or-Never program, combining Melbourne Music Week and Melbourne Knowledge Week.

This project is an excellent opportunity for our research group – the Waterway Ecosystem Research Group at the University of Melbourne – to pursue our goals for greater community understanding of river health, and greater engagement in the protection of waterways around Melbourne.

Our proposed collaboration came about as a result of seemingly unconnected discussions; Paul’s work on recording the soundscape in water bodies, and our group’s work using digitally controlled rainwater tanks – owned by householders – to release water to waterways to help sustain flows for platypus during their breeding season. This work, undertaken as part of the Melbourne Waterway Research Practice Partnership, engages householders to play an active role in helping to protect the endangered platypus populations (see: <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/saving-melbourne-s-platypus-with-smart-water-storage>).

Scientifically, we are using non-invasive ways to detect the platypus reaction to their supplementary flows, using infra-red cameras taking images every two seconds.

When Paul and I discussed the possibility of using soundscape recording as an alternative method, we began to realise that our seemingly very different areas of interest were not so different after all.

We see Paul’s proposed project as a really great way to engage the community in thinking about the uniqueness of the platypus, and getting them to think about what they can do to protect it, through advocacy or other means. The University of Melbourne will therefore commit to supporting this project, including seeking input from our various partners in the “platypus community”, and through making ourselves available to give public presentations on the platypus and its conservation.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Tim Fletcher
Waterway Ecosystem Research Group
Research Director – Melbourne Waterway Research Practice Partnership