The Victorian government has released its 2017-18 budget, noting that the state’s economy is “one of the strongest in Australia” and had experienced a 3.3% growth in 2015-16, which is above the national average of 2.7% over the same period.

$162.5 million will be invested to modernise the EPA and the budget includes a broad statement: “Greater investment will also be made in the waste and resource recovery sector, generating jobs in regional areas. Steps will also be taken to keep e-waste out of landfill and foster Victoria’s emerging waste to energy market.”

CEO of the Australian Council of Recycling (ACOR), Grant Musgrove, said some $20 million has been earmarked to be returned to industry, which is disappointing considering the state’s budget surplus is being propped up by the landfill levy.

ACOR’s Victorian Landfill Levy Report released in May noted that approximately 20% of the state’s surplus comes from the Sustainability Fund or monies collected from the landfill levy, which it said should be returned to Industry to drive recycling initiatives.

“It’s a national disgrace with only $20 million earmarked to be returned to industry and local government over the next four years, compared to hundreds of millions of dollars in other states,” Musgrove said.

Musgrove said that Victoria’s government has never tried to “usurp” Council’s role in providing these services.

However, the association’s members were “gravely concerned” that Council is seeking to restrict competition in the commercial waste and recycling sector without proper consultation or genuine consideration of the impact of the proposed law.

CEO Rick Ralph said the proposed law would result in higher prices for consumers without a commensurate increase in quality or innovation.

“The proposed local law is anti-competitive in that it allows Council to create a monopoly over commercial waste collection services in designated areas, thereby creating a barrier to competition in that market,” Ralph said, adding that the proposed law may extend further to all forms of waste collection and disposal, creating uncertainty for business moving forward.

He said the proposed law would not create public benefit but would create a long-term detriment to the Queensland public and market. More on page 22.
Bulk bag dischargers, a big help in the rubber crumbing process

END-OF-LIFE tyres... they are one of the perennial problems that plague not just Australia, but countries around the world. Inside Waste has looked at several potential and novel solutions over the years, from using it in explosives to destructive distillation. And of course, there's the established and ongoing use of rubber crumb in various applications, from road surfacing to soil conditioners to manufacturing plastic.

Flexicon Corporation, which designs and manufactures bulk handling equipment and custom-engineered and integrated plant-wide systems, is in the business of helping recyclers improve their efficiency post-crumbing, through its bulk bag dischargers.

The company’s Bulk-Out Bulk Bag Discharger system promises to change the way bulk material is stored and shipped, and says the system overcomes limitations of outdated designs, ultimately improving safety, cleanliness, and convenience for the recycler.

There are three models in Flexicon’s Bulk-Out Bulk Bag Discharger range - the BFF Series dischargers with a bag lifting frame for forklift loading and unloading of bulk bags, the BFC Series dischargers with a cantilevered I-beam, electric hoist and trolley for loading and unloading of bulk bags without the use of a forklift, and the Half Frame series, which requires operators to load bags. The first two, the company says, are the most popular options.

**Giving operators an edge**

Over in the US, where some 290 million waste tyres are generated each year, six million find their way to Edge Rubber in Pennsylvania. The company operates the country’s oldest fine mesh crumb rubber plant and it uses six Flexicon bulk bag dischargers to boost its productivity and efficiency.

Essentially, Edge Rubber shreds the tyres into 1.3cm particles, which are then fed into 907kg bulk bags. The ground particles make up 80% of the raw materials that Edge Rubber processes into fine mesh crumb rubber. The other 20% arrive in small bags from tyre re-treaders that grind a portion of the tread from used tyres prior to applying new tread to the carcasses, generating 0.5cm buffings.

Edge Rubber has eliminated manual dumping of small bags from its production process. Instead, it first transfers the contents of small bags into bulk bags which are stored, or discharged to feed ground rubber particles, along with rough shredded particles, to a cracker milling process to further reduce particle size.

It uses six automated BFC dischargers to move the rubber particles from the bulk bags to the cracker mills, with integral flexible screw conveyors from Flexicon. An operator loads a bulk bag onto the discharger frame by electric hoist and trolley on a cantilevered I-beam; the discharger unloads the particles into a 0.56m³ capacity floor hopper from which a 4.57m long flexible screw conveyor transports them into one of six cracker mills.

Once the bag is in place, the operator pulls the tied end through an iris valve, which prevents material flow while the bulk bag is being untied and allows controlled discharge of the material into the hopper once the bag has been opened.

Due to the nature of the rubber particles, material flow from the bag can be inconsistent. In order to ensure continuous and efficient operation, Flexicon’s Flow Flexer bag activation devices that are positioned on the frame continually compress and release opposite sides of the bulk bag to promote flow through the bag spout into the floor hopper.

The rubber particles flow from the discharge port of the floor hopper and charging adapter into the 4.57m long Model 1450 flexible screw conveyor, which is driven by an electric motor located at the discharge end of the conveyor. This then feeds the rubber particles through a transition adapter into the cracker mill.

Edge Rubber says before acquiring Flexicon’s systems, the company had to manually empty small bags of material from tyre re-treaders into the cracker mill. If the tyre shredder was down for maintenance or repair, the volume of buffings fed to the cracker mills was not enough to maintain full production speed, slowing down the ambient grinding process.

Unlike the slow process of manually emptying bags, Flexicon’s bulk bag dischargers and flexible screw conveyors feed all raw material into the cracker mills in a continuous, automatic flow, increasing throughput and decreasing inventory.

“Our flexible screw conveyors and bulk bag dischargers have made the transporting of the shredded materials between various processing stations faster, safer and much more efficient,” Flexicon Australia director of sales, Australia and Southeast Asia, Simon Hall, told Inside Waste.

“Our customer feels that they are now one of the most efficient scrap rubber recycling plants in the United States. As an integral part of the global Flexicon network, Flexicon Australia has access to the engineering and construction know-how that went into this US job and is able to replicate it here. We offer a solution to the environmental problem of scrap tyres.”

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