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Australia slips down 'aid rankings'

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Australia has slipped two places, to number six, on a survey that ranks the world's 21 richest countries for policies that help poor nations.

The survey, undertaken by US think tank the Center for Global Development, ranked Australia behind the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and New Zealand.

The Commitment to Development Index (CDI) rates the countries in terms of aid, trade, investment, migration, environment, security and technology policies.

In last year's study, Australia was ranked fourth, and is one of only seven countries to suffer a drop in its score since the first survey, in 2003.

Despite the drop, Australia ranked as the top nation for security policies that help poorer nations because of humanitarian interventions and peacekeeping efforts, as well as its commitment to not exporting arms to undemocratic governments.

Australia scored most highly in security (ranked first), trade (ranked fourth), migration (ranked fourth), and investment (ranked sixth).

The worst performing areas for Australia were aid (ranked 15), environment (ranked 19), and technology policies (ranked 15).

"Australia's total score is driven by its leading role in peacekeeping efforts, low trade barriers against developing country exports and migration policies favouring people from developing countries," the study said.

"But on the negative side, Australia gives only a small share of its income in foreign aid, has the highest greenhouse gas emissions rate per person and, along with the United States, is one of only two CDI countries that have not ratified the Kyoto Protocol."

In terms of the environment, Australia scored poorly because of its emissions (ranked last) and because of relatively low petrol taxes (ranking 19).


A spokesman for Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer said the government would issue a statement on the results on Monday.

"Six out of 21 sounds pretty good to me," he said.

Japan was ranked last overall in the survey, due mainly to its high trade barriers, low foreign aid as a proportion of income, poor environmental record and restrictive migration policies.

Data from the survey comes from sources such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, and from academics.

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