

Harry tipped to go bush for his art

Aboriginal-style paintings of lizards valued at \$38,000

■ LONDON

PRINCE Harry has packed up his room at Eton and is expected to head to Australia on the traditional British teenager's gap year.

The third in line to the British throne has shown interest in and talent for Aboriginal art and a stint in Australia after leaving school is his likely sojourn before starting a military career.

Harry, 18, sat for his final A-level exam on Thursday, in art, one of only two subjects he took in the British equivalent of the TEE. The other was geography.

St James's Palace announced that he would apply for Sandhurst military academy and was expected to join the army late next year.

He struggled academically but shone in sport and art.

St James's Palace said it would announce details of Harry's travel plans in September but speculation was mounting that work in an Aboriginal community would be the ideal way for the adventurous Prince to contribute to society while pursuing a personal interest.

Australia is the top destination for British school leavers who

take a year off before university, a break which has become a rite of passage for many.

His father Prince Charles, who spent a term at Geelong Grammar as a schoolboy in 1966, would want him in an organised environment, similar to his brother William's time working on environmental and community projects in Chile on his gap year.

"There are a number of gap year placements in Aboriginal communities now," said Tom Griffiths, founder of gapyear.com, Britain's foremost adviser on the post-school sabbatical.

"Some are working with doctors in Aboriginal communities, others are in conservation projects, working on farms and in communities in the bush.

"They'd be perfect for Harry."

Photos of Harry at Eton this week had two of his Aboriginal-style paintings of lizards.

The paintings have been valued at \$38,000 and Britain's leading expert on Aboriginal art was stunned by their quality.

"I'd offer him a show, I'm really, really impressed," Australian Rebecca Hossack said at her

gallery in central London where she exhibits Aboriginal art. "I had no idea he was so accomplished. If he carries on developing as quickly as he already has, he's a real artist.

"It'd be wonderful if he could work as an art coordinator at an Aboriginal community. He'd be fantastic and it would be wonderful for him to go out and see these lizards live and eat them."

Staying in an outback community also would make it easier to provide security which had a permanent, but low key, presence around Prince William in Chile.

"The best thing about the gap year for Wills and what will be for Harry if he does something specific, is he suddenly becomes normal, probably for the only time in his life," Mr Griffiths said.

"He'll just be with people who are calling him Harry and treating him like anyone else. But it will be very well choreographed. You won't just see him walking down the street in Byron Bay.

"And he's a bit of a ladies' man so there might be a lot of Australian girls who think this guy might be a bit of a catch."

—AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATED PRESS



School's over: Prince Harry exults at leaving Eton, where he spent five years, on Thursday, after loading his belongings in a garbage bag into the car. PICTURE: AP