

## **Gemma Fletcher - Auckland, New Zealand**

Gemma has always loved to compete in sports. Shortly before her fifth birthday, she was in a car accident with her whole family that killed her mother on impact, and left her in a wheelchair. She discovered sit-skiing as a 14-year-old and took to it with ease and immediate love. She continued to participate and improve as she reached adulthood, winning a gold medal in the Winter Games NZ at Cardrona during her first competitive race at age 25. At this point she had an opportunity to take the sport even further, but chose to prioritize her commitment to being a mother to her two very young children. Still, she longed to be a competitor, and ultimately joined a para-sailing crew in Auckland. She took her sailing campaign all the way around the world, securing a country spot for New Zealand for the 2016 Paralympic Games. Shortly after it was announced that sailing would not be included at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, Gemma was watching the 2018 Paralympic Winter Games and realized that she could take her skill, passion and all of the lessons learned from her sailing campaign, and set a goal to compete in alpine skiing at the next Winter Paralympics. When she started to research, she found out that no woman from New Zealand has ever competed at the Paralympic Winter Games in alpine skiing, and that she would be leading the way for a whole new generation of young women. Her aim is to show other people like her, who are longing to compete in something truly exhilarating, that this is an option in New Zealand and around the world.